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'WHAT SHE COULD."

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

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"WHAT SHE COULD."

CHAPTER I.

"GIRLS, there's a band!"

"A what?"

"A band — in the Sunday School."

"I am sure there is a careless girl in the house," put in another speaker. "Go and wipe your feet, Maria: look at the snow you have brought in."

"But mamma" —

"Go and get rid of that snow before you say another word. And you too, Matilda, — see, child, what lumps of snow are sticking to your shoes. Was there no mat at the door?"

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"There was a cold wind there," muttered Maria as she went to obey orders. "What harm does a little snow do?"

But while she went to the door again, her sister, a pretty, delicate child of fewer years, stood still and adroitly slipped her feet out of the snowy shoes she had brought in, which she put in the corner of the fireplace to thaw and dry off; the little stocking feet standing comfortably on the rug before the blaze. It was so neatly done, the mother and elder sisters looked on and could not chide. Neatness suited the place. The room was full of warm comfort; the furniture in nice order; the work, several kinds of which were in as many hands, though lying about also on chairs and tables, had yet the look of order and method. You would have said at once that there was something good in the family. The child in front of the fire told more for it. Her delicate features, the refined look and manner with which she stood there in her uncovered feet, even a little sort of fastidious

grace which one or two movements testified, drew the eyes of mother and sisters and manifestly stopped their tongues; even called forth a smile or two.

"What is all this Maria is talking about, Matilda?"

"Why we have been to the Sunday school meeting, mamma."

"I know that; and it was not a night fit for you to go. What ever possessed you and Maria?" remarked one of the sisters.

"Why, Mr. Richmond wanted to see all the Sunday School," said Matilda thoughtfully. "He wanted you too, I suppose; and you were not there."

"There is no use in having a meeting such a night. Of course, a great many people could not be there. It ought to have been put off."

"Well, it was not put off," said Matilda.

"What did he want? What was Maria talking about?"

"She is the best one to ask," said the child. At the same moment Maria came in from

getting rid of the snow, and enquired if Tilly had told them everything? Finding all was right, she sat down contentedly before the fire and stretched out her feet towards it.

"We've had a splendid time, I can tell you," she began.

"What was done in particular?" asked one of the older girls, who was making a bonnet. "More than usual?"

"A great many things in particular, and one in general. We've made a Band."

"I have made several since you have been away," the other sister remarked.

"You know we cannot understand that unless you explain," said the bonnet-maker.

"You must let Maria take her own manner," said their mother.

"Well now I'll tell you all about it," said Maria. "There weren't a great many people there, to begin with."

"Of course not! such a night."

"So there were plenty of empty benches, and it didn't look like a meeting at all, at first;

and I wondered if it would come to anything; but then Mr. Richmond came in, and I saw *he* meant something."

"Mr. Richmond always does mean something," interrupted Matilda.

"You hush, Tilly. Well, there were prayers first, of course; and then Mr. Richmond stood up in the aisle and said he wanted to know how many of us all there were willing to be really good."

"The servants of Christ, he said," Matilda explained.

"Yes, the servants of Christ, of course; and he said he didn't know any better way to get at it than that we should all stand up."

A burst of laughter from all Maria's audience a little confused her. Only Matilda looked gravely at her sister, as if she were making bad work of it. Maria coloured, stammered, and began again.

"You all know what I mean! You know what I mean, mamma. Mr. Richmond did not say that we should *all* stand up."

"Then why did you say it?"

"I thought you would understand. He said that all *those* should stand up, so that he might see who they were, who were willing to be real workers for Christ; those who were willing to give themselves to the Lord, and to do everything or anything he gave them to do for him. So we stood up, and Mr. Richmond went round and took our names down."

"Everybody who was there?"

"Why no!—those who were willing to do as Mr. Richmond said."

"Did *you* stand up?" asked one of her sisters.

"Yes—I did."

"Who else?"—after a pause.

"O a great many people. All the members of the church, of course; and then a good many more that aren't. Esther Trembleton rose; and Ailie Swan; and Mattie Van Dyke; and Frances Barth; and Mrs. Rice. And little Mary Edwards, she was there and she rose, and Willie Edwards; and Mr. Bates got up and said he was happy to see this

day. I think he was ready to cry, he was so glad."

"And is this the 'Band' you spoke of?"

"This is the Sunday School Working Band; that is what Mr. Richmond called it."

"What work are you going to do?"

"I don't know! Mr. Richmond said he could not tell just yet; but we are to have meetings and all sorts of things. And then Mr. Richmond talked."

"What about?"

"O I can't tell. You know how he talks."

"He said what the Band were to do," remarked Matilda.

"I told what that was."

"You did not tell what he said."

"Why, yes I did; he said they were to do all the work for Christ that they could; and they were to pray a great deal, and pray for each other a great deal; and they were to live right."

"Uncompromising Christian lives, he said. Mamma, what does 'uncompromising' mean?"

"Why, you know!" put in her sister.

"Tell, then, Maria," said the mother.

"Matilda must know, mamma, for Mr. Richmond explained it enough."

"Then certainly you must."

"I can't talk like Mr. Richmond, though," said Maria. "Letty, you'll spoil that bonnet if you put red flowers in."

"That's as *you* think," said Letty. "Blue would be very dull."

"Mamma, what is uncompromising?" pursued Matilda, a pair of large, serious brown eyes fastening on her mother's face to await the answer.

"Did not Mr. Richmond tell you?"

"If he did, I did not understand, mamma."

"Then he ought to use words you *can* understand; that is all I have to say. I cannot undertake to be Mr. Richmond's dictionary. Uncompromising means different things at different times. It isn't a word for you, Tilly,' the mother added with a smile at the child.

"There is only one thing Tilly will ever be uncompromising about," her oldest sister remarked.

"What is that?" the little one asked quick.

"Girls, stop talking and go to bed," said their mother. "Letitia and Anne, put up work; I am tired. Maria, you and Tilly go at once and be out of the way."

"I can't see how I am in the way," remarked Maria. "Letty has not done her bonnet yet, and she will not go till she has."

"Letty, I am not going to wait for that bonnet."

"No, ma'am — there is no need."

"I am not going to leave you up, either. I know how that works. The bonnet can be finished to-morrow. And Anne, roll up your ruffles. Come, girls!"

"What a lovely mantilla that is going to be; isn't it, mamma?" said Maria. "Won't Anne look nice when she gets it on? I wish you'd let me have one just like it, mamma."

"I do not care about your having one just

like it," said Anne. "What would be the use of that?"

"The same use, I suppose"—

"Maria, go to bed!" said her mother "And Matilda. Look what o'clock it is."

"I can't go, mamma, unless somebody will bring me some shoes. Mine are wet."

"Maria, fetch Tilly a pair of shoes. And go, children."

The children went; but Maria grumbled.

"Why couldn't you come upstairs in your stocking feet? *I* should."

"It isn't nice," said the little one.

"Nice! you're so terribly nice you can't do anything other people do. There is no use in our coming to bed now;— Anne and Letty will sit up till eleven o'clock, I shouldn't wonder; and we might just as well as not. Mamma can't get them to bed. Letty and Anne ought to have been at the meeting to-night. I wonder if they would have risen. Why did not you rise, Matilda?"

"I had not thought about it."

"Can't you do anything without thinking about it first?"

"I do not understand it yet."

"Understand! why, nothing is easier than to understand. Of course, we are all to be as good as we can be — that's all."

"You don't think that is much," said the little one, as she began slowly to undress herself. The work of undressing and dressing was always slow with Tilly. Every article of clothing taken off was to be delicately folded and nicely laid away at night; and taken out and put on with equal care and punctiliousness in the morning. Maria's stockings went one way and her shoes another; while Tilly's were put exactly ready for use under her chair. And Maria's clothes presently lay in a heap on the floor. But not till some time after Matilda's neat arrangements had been made and she herself was safe in bed. Maria had dallied while the other was undressing.

"I think you are very curious, Matilda!" she exclaimed as she followed her sister into

bed. "I shouldn't think it required much *thinking*, to know that one ought to be good."

"You haven't put out the candle, Maria."

Maria bounced from her bed, and bounced in again.

"O Maria!" said Matilda in a moment or two, plaintively, "you've *blown* it out! and the room is all filled with smoke."

"It doesn't make any difference," said Maria.

"It is very disagreeable."

"It will be gone in a minute."

"No, it wont, for I can see the red spark on the end of the candle now."

"You are so particular, Tilly!" said her sister. "If *you* ever take a notion to be good, you'll have to leave off some of your ways, I can tell you. You needn't mind a little smell of candle-smoke. Go to sleep, and forget it."

"Don't good people mind disagreeable things?" said Matilda.

"No, of course they don't. How could they

get along, you know. Don't you remember what Mr. Richmond said?"

"I don't remember that he said *that*. But then, Maria, would you mind getting up to snuff out that candle? It's dreadful!"

"Nonsense! I sha'n't do it. I've just got warm."

Another minute or two gave tokens that Maria was past minding discomfort of any sort. She was fast asleep. Tilly waited, panted, looked at the glimmering red end of the candle snuff; finally got out of bed and crept to the dressing-table where it stood, and with some trouble managed to put a stop to smoke for that night.

CHAPTER II.

THE house in which these things happened was a brown house, standing on the great high road of travel which ran through the country, and just where a considerable village had clustered round it. From the upper windows you caught a glimpse of a fine range of blue mountains, lying miles away, and with indeed a broad river flowing between; but the river was too far off to be seen, and hidden behind intervening ground. From the lower windows you looked out into the village street; clean and wide, with comfortable houses standing along the way, not crowded together; and with gardens between and behind them, and many trees shielding and overhanging. The trees were bare now; the gardens a spread of snow; the street a

white way for sleigh runners; nevertheless the aspect of the whole was hopeful, comfortable, thriving, even a little ambitious. Within this particular house, if you went in, you would see comfort, but little pretension; a neat look of things, but such things as had been mended and saved and would not be rashly replaced. It was very respectable, therefore, and had no look of poverty. So of the family gathered around the breakfast table on the morning after the Sunday school meeting. It was a fair group, healthy and bright; the four girls and their mother. They were nicely dressed; and good appetites spoke of good spirits; and the provision on the table was abundant though plain.

Maria asked if Letty had finished her bonnet last night? Letty said she had.

"And did you put those red flowers in?"

"Certainly."

"That will be gay."

"Not too gay. Just enough. The bonnet would be nothing if it had not flowers."

Maria's spoon paused half way to her mouth. "I wonder," she said gravely, "if Mr. Richmond likes red flowers?"

"He has nothing to do with *my* bonnet," said Letitia. "And no more have you. You need not raise the question. I shall wear what becomes me."

"What is the difference whether one wears red or blue, Maria?" said her mother. "Do you think one colour is more religious than another?—or more wicked? What do you mean?"

"Nothing, ma'am," Maria answered, a little abashed. "I was only thinking."

"I think Mr. Richmond likes flowers everywhere," said Matilda; "and all colours."

"People that are very religious do not wear flowers in their bonnets though, do they?" said Maria.

"Mr. Richmond did not say any such thing!" said Matilda indignantly.

"What did he say? What was all this last night's talk about?" said Anne. "I did

not understand half of it. Was it against red flowers, or red anything?"

"I did not understand any of it," said Mrs. Englefield.

"Why mamma, I told you all, as plain as could be," said Maria. "I told you he made a Band"—

"He didn't," interrupted Matilda; "the Band made themselves."

But at this, the shout that went round the breakfast table threatened to endanger the dishes.

"It's no use trying to talk," said Maria sullenly, "if you laugh so. I told you there was a Band—ever so many of us rose up and agreed that we would belong to it."

"Matilda, are you in it too?" the mother asked.

"No, mamma."

"Why not? How comes that?"

"She wasn't ready," her sister said.

"Why not, Tilly?"

"Mamma, I want to understand," said the child.

"Quite right; so do I."

"Wouldn't you do what Mr. Richmond says, whether you understand or not?" inquired Maria severely.

"I would rather know what it is, first," said Matilda in her way, which was a compound of cool and demure, but quite natural.

"And when is the next meeting?" said Letitia. "I guess I'll go."

"It won't be for a week," said Matilda.

"And will you join the Band, Letty?" Maria asked somewhat eagerly.

"How, join it?"

"Why, rise up, when you are asked."

"What does 'rising up' mean, Maria? What do you rise for?"

"Why, it means just that you promise to be good, you know."

"But I have heard you promise that a number of times, it seems to me; without 'rising up,' as you call it. Will the promise

last better, if you make it on your feet instead of sitting?"

"Now mamma," said Maria, flushing, "isn't that just wicked in Letitia?"

"My dear, I do not understand one word at present of what this is all about," her mother answered.

Perhaps Matilda was in the same mood, for she was a thoughtful little child all the way to school that morning. And at the close of the school day, when the children were going home, she went slowly and demurely along the icy street, while her sister and companions made a merry time. There had been a little thaw in the middle of the day, and now it had turned cold again, and the sidewalks were a glare of ice. Matilda was afraid, and went cautiously; Maria and the others took the opportunity for a grand slide, and ran and slipped and slid and sailed away homewards, like mad things. One after another they passed her and rushed along, till Matilda was left the last, slowly

shuffling her little feet over the track which the feet of the others had made doubly slippery. When quick steps came up behind her, and a pleasant voice spoke.

"Are you afraid you are going to tumble down?"

Matilda started, but lifted her eyes very contentedly then to the face of the speaker. They had a good way to go, for he was a tall young man. But he was looking down towards her with a bright face, and two good, clear blue eyes, and a smile; and his hand presently clasped hers. Matilda had no objection.

"Where is everybody else? how come you to be all alone?"

"They have gone ahead, sliding on the ice."

"And you do not practise sliding?"

"I am always afraid I shall fall down."

"The best way is not to be afraid; and then you don't fall down. See — no! hold fast; I shall not let you slip. —"

And the gentleman and Matilda slid along the street for half a block.

"How do you like that?"

"Very well, Mr. Richmond — with you holding me."

"It doesn't give you courage, eh? Well, we will walk on soberly together. I didn't see you stand when Maria did last night?"

"Mr. Richmond, I did not know just what it all meant; and so I sat still."

"You did not know just what it all meant?"

"No, sir."

"Then you were perfectly right to sit still. But that means that I did not speak so that you could understand me? Was it so?"

"I did not understand —" said Matilda.

"It comes to that, I suppose. It is my fault. Well, I shall remember and be very careful what I say the next time. I will speak so that you will understand. But in that case I want you to do one thing for me, Tilly, — will you?"

"If I can, Mr. Richmond."

"Do you think I would ask something you could not do?"

Matilda looked up to the blue eyes again; they were fastened upon her gravely, and she hesitated.

"Mr. Richmond — I don't know. You might."

"I hope not," he said, smiling. "I will try not. You won't promise me?"

"If I can — I will, Mr. Richmond."

"I am only going to ask you — When you hear what I have to say next time, if you understand it, will you do what you think you ought to do?"

There fell a silence upon that. Mr. Richmond's firm step on the icy ground and Matilda's light footfall passed by house after house, and still the little one's tongue seemed to be tied. They turned the corner, and went their way along Matilda's own street, where the light of afternoon was now fading, and the western sky was throwing a reflection of

its own. Past the butcher's shop, and the post office, and house after house; and still Matilda was silent, and her conductor did not speak. Until they stopped before the little gate leading to the house, which was placed somewhat back from the road. At the gate Mr. Richmond stood still.

"What about my question, Matilda?" he said, without loosing his hold of the little hand which had rested so willingly in his all the way.

"Aren't you coming in, Mr. Richmond?"

"Not to-night. What about my question?"

"Mr. Richmond," said the child slowly, — "I do not always do the things I ought to do."

"No, I know you do not. But will you do *that* thing, which you will think you ought to do, when you have heard me and understood what I say, the next time the Band has a meeting?"

Matilda stood silent, her hand still in Mr. Richmond's.

"What's the matter?"

"Perhaps I shall not want to do it," she said looking up frankly.

"I ask you to do it, all the same."

Matilda did not move, and now her face shewed great perplexity.

"Well?" said Mr. Richmond, smiling at last.

"Perhaps I *cannot* do it, Mr. Richmond?"

"Then, if you think you cannot do it, will you come and tell me?"

Matilda hesitated and pondered and hesitated.

"Do you wish it very much, Mr. Richmond?" she said, looking up appealingly into his face.

"I do wish it very much."

"Then I will!" said Matilda, with a sigh.

He nodded, shook her hand, and turned away with quick steps. Matilda went in and climbed the stairs to the room she and Maria shared together.

"What were you talking to Mr. Richmond so long about?" said Maria.

"I wasn't talking to Mr. Richmond. He was talking to me."

"What's the difference? But I wish he would talk to Ailie Swan; she wants it, I know. That girl is too much!"

"What has she done?"

"O, *you* don't know; she isn't in your set. *I* know. She's just disagreeable. I think people ought to be civil, if they are ever so good."

"I thought good people were civil always."

"Shows you don't know much."

"Isn't Ailie Swan civil?"

"I do not call it civility. What do you think, Tilly? I asked her if my South America wasn't good? and she said she thought it was not. Isn't that civility?"

"What did you ask her for?"

"Because! I knew my South America was good."

"Let me see it."

"Nonsense! You do not know the first thing about it." But she gave her little sister

the sheet on which the map was drawn. Matilda took it to a table under the window, where the dying light from the western sky fell brightest; and putting both elbows on the table and her head in her hands, studied the map.

"Where is the Atlas?"

"What do you want of the Atlas?"

"I want to see if it is like."

"It is like, of course, child."

"I can't tell without seeing," Matilda persisted. And Maria grumblingly brought the Atlas, open at the map in question. Matilda took it and studied anew.

"It is getting dark," said she at length. "But your South America is crooked, Maria."

"It isn't!" said Maria vehemently. "How should it be crooked? when we angle it on, just according to the rules."

"Angle it on?" repeated Matilda, looking at her sister.

"Yes. O, you don't understand, child; how should you? I told you you didn't know any-

thing about it. Of course, we have rules and things to go by; and my South America was put on just right."

"It is not straight, though," said Matilda.

"Why, no, it isn't straight; it is not meant to be straight; it is all crookly crawly, going in and out, all round."

"But it don't stand straight," said Matilda; "and it looks *thin*, too, Maria; it don't puff out as much as the real South America does."

"Puff out!" Maria repeated. "It's as good as Ailie's, anyhow; and a great deal better than Frances Barth's. Frances got a great blot on hers; she's so careless. George Van Dyke is making a nice one; and Ben Barth is doing a splendid map; but then Ben does everything" —

Here there was a great call to tea from below, and the girls went down. Downstairs there was excitement. A letter had come from Mrs. Candy, Mrs. Englefield's sister, saying that she herself with her daughter Clarissa

would be with them the beginning of the week. .

"To stay, mamma? O mamma, is Aunt Candy coming to stay? Do tell me. Is she coming to stay?" Maria exclaimed and questioned.

"She will stay a night with us, Maria. Don't be so eager."

"Only a night, mamma? Won't she be here longer?"

"She is coming to stay till summer, Maria," said her eldest sister. "Do be reasonable."

"I think it is reasonable to want to know," said Maria. "*You* knew; so you didn't care about it."

"I care a great deal; what do you mean?" said Anne.

"I mean you didn't care about knowing. O mamma, can't I have my dress finished before they come?"

"What dress, Maria?" her sister went on; for Mrs. Englefield was busy with the letter.

"My new merino. It is almost done; it only wants finishing."

"There's all the braid to put on, isn't there?"

"Well, that isn't much. Mamma, cannot I have my red merino finished before they come? I have got nothing to wear."

"What can you mean, Maria? You have everything you want. That is only for your best dress."

"But, mamma, it is just when I should want it, when they come; you'll be having everybody to tea. Won't you have it done for me? please, mamma?"

"I think you can do it for yourself, Maria. I have no objection to your finishing it."

"I cannot put on that braid — in that quirlicue pattern, mamma; I never did such work as that; and I haven't time, besides."

"Nor inclination," said Letitia laughing. "Come, Maria, it is time you learned to do something for yourself. Matilda, now, might

plead inexperience, and have some reason; but you are quite old enough."

The dispute would have gone on, but Mrs. Englefield desired silence, and the family drew round the tea-table. Other plans for the following weeks filled every tongue. Mrs. Candy was well off; a widow with one child, her daughter Clarissa; she had been in Europe for several years; coming back now to her own country, she was bending her steps first of all to her sister's house and family.

"We shall have the new fashions, straight from Paris," Anne remarked.

"Has Aunt Candy been in Paris? I thought she was in Scotland, mamma?"

"People may go to Paris, if they have been in Scotland, Maria. It is not so far as around the world."

"But has she been in Paris?"

"Lately."

"Mamma, what is Aunt Candy going to do with herself when summer comes? She says, 'till summer.'"

"When she tells us, I shall know, Letty At present I am as ignorant as you."

"Do you think she will buy a house here, and make her home here?"

"That depends on how well she likes Shadywalk, I imagine."

"I hope she will!"

"I would like to see, first, what she is," said Maria. "We shall have time enough for that, if they stay with us till summer. How old, mamma, is Clarissa Candy?"

"Over your age, Maria, by a year or so."

"Will she go to school with us, do you suppose, mamma?"

"I really cannot tell, Maria. I think it very likely."

"Is Aunt Candy very rich?"

"You talk like a foolish girl. Why do you want to know?"

"I was thinking whether Clarissa would be dressed a great deal better than we are."

"And what if she is?"

"Nothing. I was thinking. That's all."

"I don't think it signifies," said Matilda.

"O, Matilda has found her tongue. I was waiting to see when she would speak," cried Anne. "What don't signify, little one?"

"It don't signify, I think, whether any one is dressed better than another; anybody; Clarissa or anybody else."

"Well, you are mistaken then," said Anne; "for it does signify. All the world knows it; and what is more, all the world feels it."

"I don't think I do," said Matilda.

"Your time has not come."

"*Your* time had come, though, before you were as old as she," said her mother; "and Maria's, and Letty's."

"I know, Matilda is a wonderful child," said Anne, "but her time will come too, mamma; and *she* will find it makes a difference whether she is dressed one way or another."

"I think *that* now," observed Matilda.

"Anybody that has to fasten Tilly's dresses

knows that," laughed Maria. "I don't make half so much fuss."

"I wish you did," said her mother. "You are not near careful enough, in putting on your things. Now putting on is half the battle."

The argument lasted till Tilly and Maria went back to the consideration of South America; which was brought downstairs to the lamp.

"You haven't got the Amazon right," said Matilda; "and Rio Janeiro is too far down; and it's all crooked — don't you see?"

"No!" said Maria; "and if it is, Ailie Swan needn't have said hers was better."

"You asked her."

"Well, what if I did?"

"What could she say?"

"I don't care; it was awfully rude; and people ought to be polite, if they're ever so good."

"What is all that?" said Mrs. Englefield. "That is not Tilly's map?"

"O, no, mamma; she can't draw maps; she is only setting up for a judge."

"She would do it as well as that, if she would try," said her mother. "I wish you would love your studies, Matilda. You could do so well if you pleased."

"Clarissa Candy will make you both ashamed," said Anne. "She has learned everything, and is terribly smart; 'going on to learn everything else,' her mother says."

"Mamma," said Maria, "I have only my green silk and my blue delaine for nice dresses; and the silk is old-fashioned, you know, and the delaine is too short; and I want my merino finished."

"Finish it, then."

Maria pouted.

"I cannot afford every indulgence to you, as your aunt can to Clarissa; you must make it up by your own industry."

"But can I, mamma?"

"Can you what?"

"If I am very smart, can you give me things, if I make them up, that I can be as well dressed as Clarissa Candy?"

"Let us see the merino made first," said her mother.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was great interest now at Shady-walk, at least in one house, to know when the Liverpool steamer, "City of Pride," would be in. Conjectures proving unsatisfactory and uncertain, the whole family took to studying the marine lists in the daily papers; and when everybody else had looked them over, the last one of the family did it again with extra care; lest by some singular coincidence the letters forming the "City of Pride" might have escaped the eyes so keen set to find them. The paper grew better than a novel. It furnished a great deal of matter for conversation, besides; for all the steamers which had got in were talked over, with their dates of sailing, and number of days on the passage; with each of which

the times, certain and probable, of the "City of Pride" were compared. Then there was the question, whether Aunt Candy might have changed her mind at the last minute, and waited for another steamer; and the reports of the weather lately experienced at sea were anxiously read, and put alongside of the weather lately experienced at Shadywalk.

Preparations in the house went on diligently; whatever might help it to make a better impression, or afford greater comfort to the expected guests, was carefully done. Mrs. Englefield even talked of getting a new stair-carpet; but contented herself with having the old one taken up and put down again, the stairs washed, and the stair-rods brightened; the spare room, the large corner chamber looking to the north and west, was scrupulously swept and dusted; furniture rubbed; little white knitted mats laid on the dressing-table; the chintz curtains taken down and put up again; a new nice cham-

ber set of white china was bought, for the pitcher of the old set had an ugly nick in it and looked shabby; the towel rack was filled with white napery; the handsomest Marseilles quilt was spread on the bed; the stove was blackened and polished. It looked "very respectable," Anne said, when all was done.

What private preparations went on besides, on the part of the girls, it would be hard to say. Maria worked hard at her braiding,—that was open to anybody's observation; but there were less obvious flutings and ironings down in the kitchen, and adjusting of ribbons and flowers in secret consultations upstairs. And one piece of care was made public by Maria, who announced that Letty had trimmed her old bonnet three times over before she would be suited.

"Very well," said Letty contentedly. "I should like to know who would wear an old thing when he could have a new; and mine is like new now."

"Things can't be new always," said Matilda.

"What then?" her sisters asked laughing.

"Then it must be respectable for them to be old, sometimes."

"Respectable! Not very pleasant, when they are to be set alongside of things as new and nice as they can be. I like to be as good as anybody, for my part."

"Mamma," said Matilda, "do you know there is a great hole in the door mat?"

"It is worn out a great deal too soon," said Mrs. Englefield. "I shall tell Mr. Hard that his goods do not last; to be sure, you children do kick it to pieces with the snow."

"But, mamma, I should think you might get another, and let that one go to the kitchen."

"And then, wouldn't you like me to buy a new hall cloth? there is very nearly a hole in that."

"O, yes, mamma!"

"I cannot do it, children. I am not as rich as your Aunt Candy. You must be contented to let things be as they are."

The girls seemed to take it as a grave fact, to judge by their faces.

"And I think all this is very foolish talking and feeling. People are not any better for being rich."

"But they are a great deal happier," said Letitia.

"I don't know, I am sure. I never was tried. I think you had better put the thought out of your heads. I should be sorry if you were not as happy as your cousin, and with as much reason."

"Mamma's being sorry doesn't help the matter," said Letitia softly. "I know I should be happier if I had what I want. It is just nonsense to say I should not. And mamma would, herself."

That evening, the end of the week it was, the newspaper rewarded the first eyes that looked at its columns, with the intelligence

that the "City of Pride" had been telegraphed. She would be in that night. And the list of passengers duly shewed the names of Mrs. Candy and daughter. The family could hardly wait over Sunday now. Monday morning's train, they settled it, would bring the travellers. Sunday was spent in a flutter. But however, that Monday, as well as that Sunday, was a lost day. The washing was put off, and a special dinner cooked, in vain. The children staid at home and did not go to school, and did nothing. Nobody did any thing, to speak of. To be sure, there was a great deal of running up and down stairs; setting and clearing tables; going to and from the post office; but when night came, the house and everything in it was just where the morning had found them; only, all the humanity in it was tired with looking out of windows.

"That's the worst of expecting people!" Mrs. Englefield observed, as she wearily put herself in an arm chair, and Letitia drew the

window curtains. "You never know what to do, and the thing you do is sure to be the wrong thing. Here Judith might as well have done her washing as not; and now it's to do to-morrow, when we don't want it in the way, and it will be in the way."

"Don't you think they will come to-night, mamma?" said Matilda.

"I don't know, I am sure. I know no more than you do. How can I tell? Only don't ask me any more questions."

"Would you have tea yet, mamma?" said Letitia.

"There's a question, now! I tell you, don't ask me. Just when you like."

"There's no train due for a good while, mamma; they *couldn't* come for two or three hours. I think we had better have tea."

So she went off to prepare it, just as Matilda, who had put her face outside of the window curtain, proclaimed that somebody was coming to the door.

"Only one person though, mamma. Mam-

ma! it's Miss Redwood — Mr. Richmond's Miss Redwood."

"It wanted but that!" Mrs. Englefield exclaimed with a sort of resigned despair. "Let her in, Matilda. I locked the door."

The person who followed Matilda to the sitting room was a slim woman, in black costume, neither new nor fashionable. Indeed it had no such pretensions; for the fashion at that time was for small bonnets, but Miss Redwood's shadowed her face with a reminiscence of the coal-scuttle shapes, once worn many years before. The face under the bonnet was thin and sharp-featured; yet a certain delicate softness of skin saved it from being harsh; there was even a little peachy bloom on the cheeks. The eyes were soft and keen at once; at least there was no want of benevolence in them, while their glance was swift and shrewd enough, and full of business activity.

"Miss Redwood, how do you do? I am glad to see you. Do sit down," was Mrs.

Englefield's salutation, made without rising.

"How do you do, Mis' Englefield? Why — seems as if you was expectin' folks here?"

"Just what we are doing; and it is some of the hardest work one can do."

"Depends on who you expect, seems to me. And I guess 'tain't harder work than what I've been doing to-day. I've been makin' soap. Got it done, too. And 'tain't to do agin till this time next year comes round."

"Can you make enough at once for the whole year? I cannot."

"'Spects you use a passel, don't ye?"

"Of course — in so large a family. But you're a great hand for soap, Miss Redwood, if folks say true."

"Cellar ain't never out of it," said Miss Redwood shaking her head. "It's strong, mine is; that's where it is. You see I've my own leach sot up, and there's lots o' ashes; the minister, he likes to burn wood, and *I*

like it, for it gives me my ley; and I don't have no trouble with it; the minister, he saws it and splits it and chops it, and then when all's done he brings it in, and he puts it on. All I have to do is to get my ashes. I did think, when I first come, and the minister he told me he calculated to burn wood in his room, I did think I should give up. 'Why sir,' says I, 'it'll take a load o' wood a day, to fill that ere chimney; and I hate to see a chimney standin' empty with two or three sticks a makin' believe have a fire in the bottom of it. Besides,' says I, 'stoves is a sight cleaner and nicer, Mr. Richmond, and they don't smoke nor nothin', and they're always ready.' 'I'll take care of the fire,' says he, 'if you'll take care of the ashes.' Well, it had to be; but I declare I thought I should have enough to do to take care of the ashes; a-flyin' over everything in the world as they would, and nobody but my two hands to dust with; but I do believe the minister's wood burns quieter than other folks', and somehow it don't fly nor

smoke nor nothin', and the room keeps decent."

"Your whole house is as neat as a pin. But you have no children there to put it out of order, Miss Redwood."

"Guess we do," said the minister's housekeeper quietly; "there ain't any sort o' thing in the village but the minister has it in there by turns. There ain't any sort o' shoes as walks, not to speak of boots, that don't go over my carpets and floors; little and big, and brushed and unbrushed. I tell you, Mis' Englefield, they're goin' in between them two doors all the week long."

"I don't know how you manage then, I'm sure."

"Well *I* don't," said the housekeeper. "The back is fitted to the burden, they say; and I always *did* pray that if I had work to do, I might be able to do it; and I always was, somehow. And it's a first-rate place to go and warm your feet, when the minister is out," she added after a pause.

"What?" said Mrs. Englefield laughing.

"The minister's fire, to be sure, that I was talkin' about. Of course, I have to go in to see it's safe, when he ain't there; and sometimes I think it's cheaper to sit down and watch it than to be always runnin'."

"Mr. Richmond was a lucky man when he got you for a housekeeper," said Mrs. Englefield.

"Well — I don't know" — said Miss Redwood contemplatively, with rather a sweet look on her old face. "I 'spose I might as well say I was a lucky woman when I got his house to keep. It come all by chance, too, you may say" —

"Mamma, tea is ready," Maria here interrupted.

"Miss Redwood, will you come down and have tea with us?"

"No; but what I come to ask was somethin' different. I was so taken up with my soap-kettle all day, I just forgot somethin' more important, and didn't make no new

risin'; and I hain't got none to-night for the minister's bread. I know you're one of the folks that likes sweet bread, Mis' Englefield, and has it; and I've come to beg a cup o' your risin'."

One of the girls was sent for the article, and Mrs. Englefield went on.

"The minister's an easy man to live with, I suppose; isn't he?"

"What sort do you mean by that, Mrs. Englefield?"

"Why!—I mean he is easily suited, and don't give more trouble than can be helped, and don't take it hard when things go wrong.

"Things don't go wrong, fur's I know," said Miss Redwood. "Not with him, nor with me."

"Easily pleased, isn't he?"

"When folks do just what they'd ought to do, he *is*," said the housekeeper with some energy. "I have no sort of patience, for my part, with the folks that are pleased when they hadn't ought to be pleased."

"But isn't that what Mr. Richmond preaches to us all the time? that we ought to be pleased with everybody?"

"Why, no, mamma!" said Matilda.

"I thought he did."

"I take it t'other way," Miss Redwood observed. "It comes close, it does, some of the minister's talk; but I always think, if I had a right to be better pleased with myself maybe other folks' onesidedness wouldn't worry me. I'll do as much for you, next time, Miss Letty," she said rising to take what that young lady had brought her. And therewith away she went.

"Well, we have got off with our lives this time," said Mrs. Englefield. "Now, girls, let us have tea."

"Mamma, I believe here they are this minute," said Matilda. "The omnibus is stopping."

It was declared to be impossible; but nevertheless found true. The omnibus was certainly at the door, backing down upon the

sidewalk; and two figures did get out of it and came through the little courtyard to the house. And then all doubts were resolved; Mrs. Candy was in the arms of her sister, and the cousins were looking at each other.

That is, as soon as people could get their wrappings off. Letty and Maria were assiduous in their endeavours to relieve Miss Clarissa of her hood and furs and the cloakings and mufflings which a night ride had rendered necessary; while Anne waited upon her aunt; and impressions were forming and opinions taking ground, under all the confused chatter about the journey, the train, the omnibus, and the "City of Pride;" opinions and impressions which were likely enough to get turned topsy-turvy in another day or two; but for the present nobody knew that.

"And here is somebody who says nothing!" Mrs. Candy remarked, stooping down to touch Matilda's hair with a light finger.

"Tilly does the thinking for the family,"

said Mrs. Englefield. "Now do come down and have some tea."

"Down? Where are we going?" said Mrs. Candy. "Your house stands on the ground level, I noticed."

"O, we have a very nice basement; and just for eating, you know, it does not make much difference where you are, — and it is so much more convenient, being near the kitchen."

"In Germany we used to take our meals in the open air a great deal," Mrs. Candy went on, as the party filed down the narrow stairs.

"In the open air! Not at this season?"

"Well, not with the thermometer at zero," said Mrs. Candy laughing a little. "Nor at quite so high a temperature as you have here!"

The room downstairs was bright enough, and looked cheerful, with its well spread table and tea urn; but it was low, and full of close stove heat. The travellers got as far from the source of this as the limits of the table would

let them, and presently begged for an open door. But Mrs. Englefield's tea was good; and very soon the family talk began to move naturally. Mrs. Candy pleased her nieces. A fine looking and also a kind looking woman, with a good figure, well clothed in a handsome travelling dress; a gold watch and chain; and an easy, good humoured, and at the same time sensible air and way of talking. It was not difficult to get acquainted with her; she met all advances more than half way; and her talk even that first evening was full of amusement and novelty for the young people. It was less easy to know what to think of Clarissa. Her cousins held a consultation about her that night before going to sleep.

"She looks as old as Letty."

"But she isn't. O, she don't, either."

"She's well looking; don't you think so?"

"I'll tell you what I think," said Matilda. "She's beau-ti-ful."

"I don't think *so*," said Letty; "but she's an uncommon looking girl."

"How old *is* she?"

"She is sixteen."

"Well! Maria's only half a year younger than that."

"She hasn't said three words yet; so I cannot tell what she is," Anne remarked.

"She didn't like going down into the basement," said Letty.

"How do you know?"

"I know she didn't!"

"I should like to know where she would go; there is no other place," said Maria.

"I suppose that is just what she didn't like," said Letitia.

"There might be, though," Matilda began again. "If mamma would open the back room behind the parlour, and move the table and things up there, — I think it would be a great deal pleasanter."

"That's like Matilda!" the other girls exclaimed in chorus.

"Well, I *don't* think that basement room is

pleasant," said the girl. "I never did. I am always glad to get out of it."

"And now, I suppose, you will be taking all Clarissa's dainty ways, in addition to your own!" said Letitia. "I wonder what will become of the rest of us."

"What dainty ways has Clarissa?" Matilda inquired.

"You can see for yourself. She doesn't like the heat of a stove! and she must look at her watch to see what time it is, though the clock was right opposite to her."

"I am sure I would look at a watch, if I had it," Matilda added.

"And did you see what travelling gloves she wore?"

"Why not?" said Matilda.

"Why not, of course! you will have no eyes for any one shortly but Clarissa Candy; I can see it. But she is a member of the church, isn't she?"

"What if she is?" said Matilda. "Mamma

read that in one of Aunt Candy's letters, I remember."

"We'll see what Mr. Richmond will say to her. Maria reports that he does not like red flowers; I wonder what he will think of some other things."

"That is only Maria's nonsense," Matilda insisted. "I know Mr. Richmond likes red flowers; he has got a red lily in his room."

"In his room — oh yes! but not in people's bonnets, you know; nor in their heads; if they are Christians."

"I can't imagine what people's being Christians has to do with red flowers," said Matilda. "Besides, Clarissa hadn't any flowers about her at all. I don't know what you are talking of."

"Didn't you see her gold chain, though, that hung round her neck?"

"Her watch was on that. Mayn't Christians wear gold chains? What nonsense you do talk, Letitia!"

"I shouldn't want to be a Christian if I

thought I couldn't wear anything," Maria remarked.

"Nor would I," said Letitia. "So I advise you, my dears, to be a little careful how you join Bands and such things. You may find that Mr. Richmond is not just the sort of Christian you want to be."

The conclave broke up, having reached a termination of general dissatisfaction common to such conclaves. Maria went to bed grumbling. Matilda was as usual silent.

The next day, however, found all the family as bright as itself. It was a cold day in January; snow on the ground; a clear sharp sunshine glittering from white roofs and fence tops and the banks of snow heaped against the fences, and shining on twigs and branches of the bare trees; coming into houses with its cheery and keen look at everything it found, as if bidding the dark sides of things, and the dusty corners, to change their characters and be light and fair. In the basement the family

gathered for breakfast in happy mood, ready to be pleased with each other; so pleasure was the order of the day. Pleasure had a good deal to feed on, too; for after the long breakfast was over and the conversation had adjourned to the parlour, there came the bestowing of presents which Clarissa had brought for her friends. And they were so many and so satisfactory, that the criticisms of the past night were certainly for the present forgotten; Letitia forgave her cousin her daintiness, and Maria overlooked the gold watch. Matilda as usual said little, beyond the civil needful words, which that little girl always spoke gracefully.

"You are a character, my dear, I see," her aunt observed, drawing Matilda to her side caressingly.

"What is that, Aunt Candy?"

"Well, I don't know, my dear," her aunt answered laughing; "you put me to define and prove my words and you bring me into difficulty. I think, however, I shall be safe in

saying, that a 'character' is a person who has his own thoughts."

"But doesn't everybody?"

"Have his own thoughts? No, my dear; the majority have the thoughts of other people."

"How can they, Aunt Candy?"

"Just by not thinking for themselves. It saves a great deal of trouble."

"But we all think for ourselves," said Matilda.

"Do we? Reflect a little. Don't *some* of you think like other people? — about ways of doing, and acting, and dressing, for instance?"

"O yes. But — Aunt Candy — if people think for themselves, *must* they do unlike other people?"

"If they follow out their thoughts, they must, child."

"That suits Matilda then," said her sister Anne.

"Well, it is very nice for a family to have one character in it," said Mrs. Candy.

"But, Aunt Candy, isn't Clarissa a character too?"

"I don't know, Tilly; I really have not found it out, if she is. Up to this time she always thinks as I think. Now she has given you the tokens of remembrance she has brought home for you;—what do you think *I* have got?"

"O aunt, nothing more!" exclaimed Anne.

"Clarissa and I are two people, if neither of us is a character however," said Mrs. Candy. "Her gifts are not my gifts. But mine shall be different from hers. And if there is more than one character among us, I should like to find it out; and this will do it."

So saying, she fetched out her purse and presented to each of her sister's children a bank-note for twenty five dollars.

Mrs. Englefield exclaimed and protested. But Mrs. Candy laid her hand on her sister's mouth and declared she must please herself in her own way.

"What do you want us to do with this

Aunt Candy?" Matilda inquired in a sort of contemplative wonder.

"Just whatever will please you, will please each of you, best. Only that. That is my condition, girls, if I may call it so. You are not to spend that money for any claims of duty or conscience — but simply in that way which will afford you the highest pleasure."

Thanks were warm and gratification very high; and in the best mood in the world the new relations sat down to talk to each other and study each other for the remainder of the day. Clarissa pleased her cousins. She was undoubtedly extremely pretty, with big brown honest eyes, that gave a good full look into the face she was speaking to; beautiful hair a little lighter in colour, and great sweetness of outline and feature. Yet she was reserved; very quiet; very self-possessed; to a degree that almost carried an air of superiority in the minds of her cousins. Those large brown eyes of hers would be lifted swiftly to the face

of some one speaking, and then go down again, with no sign of agreeing or disagreeing, indeed with no sign of her thought at all; but she *had* thoughts of course; why should she not show them, as her cousins did? It was almost supercilious, to the fancy of Anne and Letitia; Matilda and Maria were fascinated. Then her hands were more delicate than those of Mrs. Englefield's children; and there were one or two costly rings on them. Anne and Letty did not understand their value, but nevertheless even they could guess that they belonged to a superior description of jewellery from that which was displayed beneath the glass cases of Mr. Kurtz, the watchmaker of Shadywalk. Then Clarissa's dress was of fine quality, and made beautifully, and her little gold watch with its chain "put a finish upon it," Anne said. A little hair necklace with a gold clasp was round her neck besides; and her comb was real tortoise-shell. Clarissa was dainty, there was no doubt; but her sweet mouth was

grave and modest; her words were few; her manners were very kindly and proper; and her cousins on the whole were obliged to approve her.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT is all this hurry about?" Clarissa inquired one evening, as they were going downstairs in answer to the tea-bell, "why are we earlier than usual? Anne says we are."

"O, because it is prayer meeting night — no, not prayer meeting, it isn't either, but our Band meeting; and we have to be early for that, you know. O, you don't know anything about our Band; but you will, to-night. You'll join it, won't you, Clarissa?"

"I know something about Bands," said Clarissa; "but I never belonged to one. Is it the custom here for ladies to do such things?"

"What things? And do you know about Bands? like ours?"

"I dare say I shall find I have something to learn," said Clarissa.

"There is a great deal to learn from Mr. Richmond, I can tell you," said Maria. "O, you don't know Mr. Richmond, you haven't seen him, because Sunday was so stormy. Well, you'll see him to-night."

"Aunt Englefield," said Clarissa when they were seated at the tea-table,—"is your Mr. Richmond Band-master as well as clergyman?"

"Bands are a mystery to me, Clarissa," said Mrs. Englefield; "I do not understand Maria when she gets upon that subject. I hope you will be able to enlighten me some time. Are you going to-night?—well, then, I shall hope to be wiser when you return."

Tea was hurried through, cloaks and furs and hoods and all sorts of wrappings were put on; and the party set forth; Anne and Letitia this time going along. It was pleasanter out than in. White streets and clear starlight, and still, cold, fine air. About the

corner a few men and boys were congregated, as usual; after passing them and turning into the other street, few passengers were to be seen. Here and there one, or a group, making for the lecture-room; here and there somebody seeking a friend's house for pleasure; nobody was out on business at Shadywalk in the evening, and no wagons or sleighs got belated in the darkness. It would have been very dark, but for the snow and the stars. There were no shop windows illuminated, and no lamps along the street and no gas anywhere. Past the shut-up houses and stores, in the dim snowy street, the little cluster of girls went swiftly on.

"You are in a great hurry," said Clarissa.

"O, we want to get there before anything begins," Maria said. "And it's cold, besides!"

"What church is this we are passing?"

"O, this is our church. You haven't seen it. It is real nice inside."

"Not outside?" said Clarissa. "Well, I

cannot see it in this light. And is that next place the one we are going to?"

"Yes, that's our lecture-room. That's *very* nice."

So it was. Pleasant light from withinside streamed warm through the hanging window-blinds of the long windows, and promised welcome before they got in. At the door, under the projecting hood, a lamp shone bright upon the entrance steps. People were flocking in. The opening door let them into a cheerful room, not large, with long rows of seats on either hand of a wide matted aisle; the view closed by a little desk at the further end on a raised platform. Right and left of the desk, two small transepts did somewhat to enlarge the accommodations of the place; which had a cozy, home look, comfortable and bright.

"Where do those doors lead to?" Clarissa whispered;—"behind the desk?"

"O, those open to the infant class room. Isn't it nice?" Maria answered.

"It is small," said Clarissa.

"It is large enough, though. *We* shall not fill it to-night."

And they did not. There was only a little company gathered, of various ages. Some quite grown people; many who were younger. They had drawn towards the upper end of the room, and clustered near the platform.

"There is Mr. Richmond," Maria whispered presently; "do you see him? he is up there near the desk talking to Mr. Barker,— Mr. Barker is one of our teachers, but he has got nothing to do with the Band. That is Mrs. Trembleton, isn't she pretty?— sitting down there in front; she always sits just there, if she can, and I have seen her ever so put out if she couldn't — when somebody else had got it, you know. And there"—

"But, Maria," whispered Clarissa gravely, "do you think it is quite proper to whisper so in church?"

"This isn't church!" Maria replied with great readiness.

"What then?"

"Why, it is only our Sunday school room and this is a Band meeting."

"It looks very like church to me," said Clarissa. "Hush! — don't whisper any more."

For the minister now took his stand at the little desk before mentioned; and even Maria was quiet enough during the prayer with which he began the proceedings. But then Mr. Richmond came in front of the desk, and began to speak, seriously indeed, but with an easy simplicity which Clarissa thought was "not like church."

"It may not be known to everybody present," Mr. Richmond began, "exactly what was done at our last meeting here Thursday night. I wish it to be very well understood, that every one may join with us in the action we took, intelligently; — or keep away from it, intelligently. I wish it to be thoroughly understood. We simply pledged ourselves, some of us who were here Thursday night, to live and work for Christ to the best and the utmost of our ability, as He would give us

grace to do. We pledged ourselves to each other and to our Master; to the end that we might the better help each other, being so pledged; and that we might enter into some system and plan of work by which we might accomplish much more than we could hope to do without plan or system. I have a list in my hand, of various kinds of work which it may be well for us to attempt; some kinds will suit some people and other kinds will suit other people; but before we go into a consideration of these, I will read something else to you. We must do this thing — we must enter into this pledge to God and each other, those of us who enter into it, — knowing exactly what we do, and if possible, why we do it. I have drawn up in a few words what we mean, or what we ought to mean, in giving this pledge; and now I am going to read it to you; and after I have read it I shall ask all of you who have heard it and agreed to it, to rise up, without any regard to the question whether you were among those who rose last

Thursday or not. I wish no one to stand who does not fully and intelligently agree to every word of this covenant; — but I hope that will be the case with every one of you all. The children can understand it as well as the grown people. This is the covenant.

"'We are the servants of Christ.

"'And as he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves but unto him — so we do not count ourselves to belong to ourselves. We are the Lord's.

"'We want to do all we can do, that would please him and honour him, whether it be in our own hearts or in the world.

"'So we stand ready to do his will; in telling the good news to others; in shewing how precious we hold it; in carrying help of every sort to our neighbour, upon every opportunity; walking as children of the Light; if by any means we may advance our Lord's kingdom and glory.

"'And all this we will try to do, by his

help, — trusting in his grace and resting in his promises, whose word cannot fail.'"

"Now," said Mr. Richmond when he had read this, which he read very slowly and deliberately, as if he wished that every one should weigh every word, "I am going to ask you to rise and so declare your agreement with this covenant — all of you who have heard and understood it, and who are ready to pledge yourselves to its responsibilities. Every one whose own mind and wish this covenant expresses will please rise."

The little stir which this request occasioned through the room, left few of the assembly in their seats. Maria, as soon as she was upon her feet, looked to see how it was with her companions. To her great satisfaction, Clarissa was standing beside her; but Anne and Letitia were sitting in their places, and so was Matilda in hers beyond them. Maria frowned and nodded at her; but Mr. Richmond had desired the people to sit down again before these signs could take any effect.

"It is as I hoped," Mr. Richmond said in a satisfied voice. "I have no alteration to make in my lists, beyond the addition of one or two new names; and that sort of alteration I shall be glad to make whenever people will let me. I will receive new names at any time, of those who wish to join our Band — our Working Band. I do not know what we shall call ourselves; but one thing is certain, we mean to be a working people. Now suppose we see what kinds of work we are prepared to undertake — each one of us in particular. Of course, we are *all* to do *all* we can and of *all* kinds; but there are some kinds of work that each one can do better than he can do others; and to those particular lines of effort each one will pledge himself to give special attention.

"The first thing on my list, is, —

"'*Bringing new scholars to the school.*' Who will take this as his special work? Observe, it is not meant that you should ask any children to come to our school who are

already members of some other school. We do not wish that. But who will undertake to look out and bring in some of the children that go nowhere? All who want to do this, raise your hands."

There was a show of hands.

"We must have a secretary," said Mr. Richmond. "Mr. Van Dyke, here is paper and ink, — will you kindly come and write for us? We want to put down all the names that enlist in this department of work. This is Number One. Put down, opposite to Number One, Mattie Van Dyke, Willie Edwards, Mary Edwards, Maria Englefield," —

Mr. Richmond went on giving the names until some eight or ten were registered. The children looked delighted. It was great doings.

The next thing on Mr. Richmond's list was the "*School singing.*" He explained that he wished the special attention of those who could give it, to this matter; that they should always stand ready to help the singing in the

Sunday school, and make it just as good as it could be, and keep it good; that they should not wait for others, if there was no one to lead, but start the hymn themselves and carry it through with spirit.

There were not so many that pledged themselves to this work, but as before, Maria was one.

The third thing, was "*Welcoming strangers and new scholars*," in the church and in the school. Here a breeze sprung up. Mr. Richmond had remarked upon the great importance of this duty and the common neglect of it; nevertheless there seemed to be some prospect that the neglect would continue. Mrs. Trembleton asked, "How were such strangers to be welcomed?"

"What would you like yourself, Mrs. Trembleton? Suppose you were to go to a strange church, where you knew nobody. Would it be pleasant to have some one come up and take your hand and say you were welcome? and give you a greeting when you

met in the street? — perhaps come to see you?"

"I think," said Mrs. Trembleton after a pause, "it would depend a good deal on who it was did it!"

"Whether it would be pleasant?" said Mr. Richmond smiling. "But you do not doubt that it would be pleasant to any stranger to have *you* come up and speak and shake hands, and do such offices of kindness?"

"It might be pleasant to them," said Mrs. Trembleton. "I don't think I should like to do it, to everybody.".

"What do you say, Miss Benyon?" Mr. Richmond asked.

"O, I couldn't, Mr. Richmond!" the young lady answered shrinking.

"I'll do it," spoke out one of the boys.

"George Lockwood will welcome strangers, Mr. Van Dyke," said the minister. "And Willie Edwards holds up his hand, — and Ben Barth. But shall we have none but the boys to do the welcoming? The new scholars will

not be all boys. Ah, there is Miss Peach; Ellen Peach, Mr. Van Dyke;—and Maria Englefield,—and Sarah Bent."

"Won't it make confusion in the school?" Mr. Van Dyke suggested.

"Will not what make confusion?"

"Why, if half a dozen scholars are jumping up and leaving their classes, to receive somebody who is coming in?"

"I did not say that they should choose lesson time—or school time at all—for their kind civilities. After school is over—or when meeting in the street—or going into church. Opportunities will present themselves. It is rather the will that seems to be wanting, than the way."

"It seems to me," spoke out another lady, "this welcoming of strangers is everybody's business."

"Proverbially, nobody's business, Miss Fitch," Mr. Richmond answered with a smile. "You will leave it for me to do; and I shall conclude that Mrs. Trembleton will

attend to it; Mrs. Trembleton does not like the charge;—and there we are. Esther, what do you say?"

"O, I should not like to do it, Mr. Richmond!"

Nobody seemed to like to do it. Some were shy; some were humble, or thought they were; some fancied themselves of too little consequence; some of too much! Mr. Richmond went on to the next thing, which was "*Temperance Work.*" Here there was no want of volunteers. Boys and girls, and young ladies, and even men, were ready to pledge themselves to this cause. The names were many. It took some time to get them all down.

Then came what Mr. Richmond's list called "*Aid and Comfort;*" and which he explained to mean, the giving of all sorts of material and social aid that the cases of sick and poor and distressed might call for. Anybody who would visit such cases, and provide or procure what they needed, or anybody un-

able to visit who would furnish the necessary supplies if called upon, might be enrolled on this committee. Plenty of people were ready for this.

"*Visiting absent scholars*" found quite a number willing to engage in it. The cause of "*Missionary Collections*" and "*Sunday school prayer meetings*" found but few; evidently those were not popular objects. "*Promoting attendance upon church*" did not meet with much favour. The tenth department of work was "*Carrying the Message.*" This Mr. Richmond explained to mean, the telling the good news of Christ to all who have not heard or who do not accept it; to everybody we can reach, at home and abroad, wherever we may. There were not a few who were ready to pledge themselves to this; as also to "*Bible Reading,*" in houses where sickness or poverty or ignorance made such work desirable. But "*Tract Distributing,*" which one would have thought a very kindred effort with the two last, was much

more cautiously undertaken. Some boys were ready for it; a few girls; very few grown up people of either sex.

The young people of Mrs. Englefield's family walked home more silently than they had come. To be sure, there was a little throng of persons going their way; they could not speak in private. So under the still, bright stars, they went home without telling any of their thoughts to each other. But perhaps the air was chilly after coming out of the heated lecture room; for they all poured into the parlour to get warm, before going upstairs to take off their things.

"Well, you are late," Mrs. Englefield said.

"Yes; but we had, O such a nice meeting!" Maria answered.

"What was it all about? Now, I hope, we shall get at some light on the subject."

But the light was not in a hurry to come. Anne and Letitia loosened their bonnet strings, and sat down; Maria and Matilda threw off their cloaks and hoods and sought

the fire; nobody volunteered to be spokesman for the party.

"What was done, Clarissa?" her mother asked.

"I can hardly tell, mamma. A sort of association formed, for doing parish work."

"I do not think much of associations," Mrs. Candy said. "People can work just as well in private, if they would only be content. Did *you* join this association?"

"What is *parish work*, Clarissa?" Matilda asked.

"Why, work in the parish, of course," Mrs. Englefield answered.

"I don't know what the parish is, mamma?"

"Don't you? Well, — all the people that Mr. Richmond has the care of, I suppose; isn't it, sister?"

"But who has he the care of?" Matilda persisted, looking up at her mother earnestly.

"Well, child," said Mrs. Englefield half

laughing, "in a sort, he has the care of all the people he preaches to."

"Does he?" said Matilda. But at that the laugh became general.

"Why not, Tilly?" said Mrs. Candy.

"Who gave him the care of us?" said Matilda thoughtfully.

"A minister always has the care of a church, when he has a church," said Mrs. Candy. "Is this Tilly's way of going into things in general, Marianne?"

"*But*," said Matilda, — "can anybody take a church and take care of people, if he has a mind?"

"No; only a man who has been properly educated and appointed."

"Then how comes he to have the *care* of us?"

"Come here, Tilly," said Clarissa. And she began a whispered explanation to which the little girl listened intently.

"I do not hear yet what was the business done to-night?" Mrs. Englefield went on.

"Why, there were committees formed," said Letitia, "for doing every sort of business under heaven."

"Committees!" said the two ladies who had staid at home.

"Maria can tell you," said Anne. "Maria, on how many committees are you?"

Maria hugged the fire and did not answer.

"On how many, Maria?"

"I don't know. I didn't count."

"I lost count, too," her sister said. "Let me see. Mamma, Maria has undertaken to find and bring in new scholars for the school."

"I hope she will be punctual in going herself, then," said Mrs. Englefield. "She *hasn't* been, this six months past, to my knowledge."

"O, but I am now, mamma," said Maria.

'She has undertaken to practise for the school singing."

"I didn't," said Maria. "I only said I would help in it."

"Your help will not be worth much without practising. She has promised to undertake temperance work, too. *How* she will manage it, I do not know; unless she is going to begin upon us here at home. We are all such hard drinkers."

"Almost all the Sunday school are engaged to help in temperance work," said Maria, standing on her defence.

"How are *you* going to do anything?" her mother asked. "You have neither brothers, nor father, nor cousins, in danger, that you can go to work upon them. What are you going to do, Maria?"

"That is but the beginning, mamma," Anne went on. "Maria is also engaged to visit the sick and afflicted and make soup and give medicine for them."

"Why I did not, Anne!" Maria exclaimed again.

"What did you mean, then, by joining the 'Aid and Comfort' committee?"

"I did not say I would make soup, or

give medicine. Everybody does not make soup."

"No; and so I thought that is just what the 'Aid and Comfort' committee agreed to do."

"And the doctors give the medicine," said Matilda. "Clarissa is on that committee too."

"We can go together;" said Maria; "and we can find something to do."

"Something for somebody else to do," said Anne. "You can find who would like some soup, can't you?"

"There are next to no poor people in Shadywalk," said Mrs. Englefield. "I don't believe there is anybody in the village who would like some soup better than I should."

"There are several doctors," said Anne; "so I am afraid there are sick people occasionally. Else the doctors will soon be in want of soup. But, mamma, *that* is not the whole of Maria's engagements. She has

pledged herself to 'carry the message,' read the Bible, and distribute tracts."

"Don't you read the Bible now, Maria?" her mother asked.

"O yes, mamma," said Matilda. "This means reading the Bible to somebody who is blind, you know, or sick and can't read, or who doesn't know how."

"There are no such people in Shadywalk," said Mrs. Englefield promptly.

"Shadywalk is a happy village then," said her sister.

"When do you expect to find time for all these things, Maria?" her mother continued. "Do you know what a state your bureau drawers are in, at this minute? You told me you had been too busy to attend to them. And the frock that you spilt ink on, the week before last, at school, you have not mended; and you need it; and you said you could not get a minute."

"I have been busy about something else, mamma," Maria said.

"That braiding. Yes. But there is always 'something else.' There are other things that ought to begin at home, besides charity. Do *you* belong to this association, Matilda?"

"No, mamma," came in a low voice from the child.

"Why not?"

The answer was not ready.

"Have you joined it, Clarissa?" her mother asked.

"Yes, mamma."

"And what have you pledged yourself to do?".

"I think nothing, mamma, that I was not properly pledged to before."

"Such as what?"

"I gave my name for the visiting and helping sick and poor people; for the singing in the school; — I believe that is all, mamma."

"I shall not let you go where there is sickness," said Mrs Candy. "When did you pledge yourself to that ever?"

"When I took the vows of the church, mamma," Clarissa said with a little hesitation, "I suppose I engaged to do some of these things."

"Some of them; I have no objection to your singing as much as you like; but as to your going where there are fevers and bad air and all that sort of thing, I should not be willing at all."

"There will not be much occasion for it in Shadywalk," said Mrs. Englefield. "We have few poor people; there are not many who have not friends of their own to take care of them."

"Anne and Letitia, you have nothing to do with all this?" their aunt asked.

"I have enough to do as it is, Aunt Candy," said Anne.

"And I don't like the new sorts of work, Aunt Erminia," said Letitia.

"I know you wanted to stand up with us this evening, though," said Maria. "You felt bad because you didn't."

This remark threatened to disturb the harmony of the party; so Mrs. Englefield broke it up and sent everybody to bed.

"How do you like our Mr. Richmond, Clarissa?" she asked, as they were separating.

"I don't know, Aunt Marianne; it struck me he was something of an enthusiast."

"That is just what I think," said Mrs. Englefield.

"Those people are dangerous, Marianne," said Mrs. Candy.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day but one, in the afternoon, a little figure set out from Mrs. Englefield's gate on a solitary expedition. She had left her sisters and cousin in high debate, over the various probabilities of pleasure attainable through the means of twenty five dollars. Matilda listened gravely for a while; then left them, put on her hood and cloak and went out alone. It was rather late in the short winter afternoon; the slanting sunbeams made a gleam of cheer, though it was cold cheer too, upon the snowy streets. They stretched away, the white streets, heaped with banks of snow where the gutters should be, overhung with brown branches of trees, where in summer the leafy canopy made a pleasant shade all along the way. No shade was

wanted now; the air was growing more keen already since the sun had got so far down in the west. Tilly turned the corner, where by Mr. Forshew's hardware shop there was often a country wagon standing, and always a knot of loitering men and boys gathering or retailing the news, if there was any; when there was none, seeking a poorer amusement still in stories and jests, mingled with profanity and tobacco. Tilly was always glad to have passed the corner; not that there was the least danger of incivility from any one lingering there, but she did not like the neighbourhood of such people. She turned up towards the church, which stood in one of the principal streets of the village. Matilda herself lived in the other principal street. The two were at right angles to each other, each extending perhaps half a mile, with comfortable houses standing along the way; about the "corner" they stood close together, for that was the business quarter and there were the stores. Passing the stores and

shops, there came next a succession of dwelling houses, some of more and some of less pretension; in general it was *less*. The new houses of the successful tradesmen were for the most part in the street where Matilda's mother lived. These were many of them old and low; some were poor. Here there was a doctor's shop; there a heap of dingy sheep skins and brown calf hides cast down at a door, told of the leather store; here and there hung out a milliner's sign. A few steps further on the other side of the way, a great brick factory stood; Matilda had no very distinct notion of what wares it turned out, but the children believed they were iron works of some sort. A cross street here led to side ways which extended parallel with the main thoroughfare, one on the north and one on the south of it, and which though more scatteringly built up, were yet a considerable enlargement of the village. A little further on, and Matilda had reached the church; in her language *the* church, though only one of

several in which the villagers delighted. A great creamy-brown edifice, of no particular style of architecture, with a broad porch upheld by a row of big pillars, and a little square tower where hung a bell, declared to be the sweetest and clearest of all in the neighbourhood. So, many thought, were the utterances inside the church. Just beyond, Matilda could see the lecture room, with its transepts, and its pretty hood over the door, for all which and sundry other particulars concerning it she had a private favour; but Matilda did not go so far this afternoon. Short of the lecture room, a gate in the fence of the church grounds stood open; a large gate, through which wagons and carriages sometimes passed; Matilda turned in there, and picked her way over the ridgy snow down the lane that led to the parsonage.

The parsonage sat thus quietly back from the sights and noises of the street; a little brown house, it looked, half hidden in summer by the sweeping foliage of the elms that

overarched the little lane; half sheltered now in winter by a goodly pine tree that stood in the centre of the little plot of grass round which swept the road to the front door. Wheels or runners had been there, for the road was tracked with them; but not many, for the villagers needed no such help to get to the minister, and there were few of the church people who lived at a distance and could leave their work and take their teams on a week day to come a-pleasuring; and still fewer who were rich enough to do as they liked at all times. There were some; but Matilda ran little risk of meeting them; and so mounted the parsonage steps and lifted the knocker with no more than her own private reasons for hesitation, whatever those might be. She knocked, however, and steps came within and Miss Redwood opened the door.

"Well!" she said, "here's the first one this blessed afternoon. I thought I was going to get along for once without any one; but such

luck don't come to me. Wipe the snow off, dear, will you, clean; for my hall's as nice as — well, I don't know what; as nice as it had ought to be. That will do. Now come in, for the air's growin' right sharp. What is it, my dear?"

"Is Mr. Richmond at home?" Matilda asked.

"Well, I s'pose he is. I hain't hearn him nor seen him go out since noon. Do ye want to see him, or is it a message? — ye want to see him, eh. Well, I s'pose he'll see you — if he ain't too busy — and I don't know when he gets time for all he has to do, but he gets it; so I s'pose I had ought to be satisfied. *I* don't, I know; but I s'pose men and women is different. Some folks would say that's a reason why men was created the first and the best; but I don't think so myself. And here I am an old goose, a-talkin' to little Tilly Englefield about philosophy, instead o' lettin' her into the minister's room. Well, come in, dear; round this way; the minister

has taken a notion to keep that door shut up because of the cold."

Miss Redwood had not been idle during the utterance of this speech. First she had been shaking the snow from the door mat on which Matilda's feet had left it; then she seized a broom and brushed the white masses from the hall carpet out to the piazza and even off the painted boards of that. Finally came in, shut the door, and led Matilda to the back of the hall, where it turned, and two doors, indeed three, confronted each other across a yard of intervening space. The housekeeper knocked at the one which led into the front room; then set it open for Matilda to go in, and closed it after her.

A pleasant room that was, though nothing in the world could be more unadorned. Deal shelves all around were filled with books; a table or two were piled with them; one, before the fire, was filled as well with papers and writing materials. This fronted, however, a real blazing fire, the very thing Miss

Redwood had once been so uneasy about; in a wide open chimney place, where two great old-fashioned brass andirons with round heads held a generous load of oak and hickory sticks, softly snapping and blazing. The sweet smell of the place struck Matilda's sense, almost before she saw the minister. It was a pure, quiet, scented atmosphere that the room held; where comfort and study seemed to lurk in the very folds of the chintz window curtains, and to shine in the firelight, and certainly seemed to fill Mr. Richmond's arm-chair even when he was not in it. He rose out of it now to meet his little visiter and laid study on the table. Of one sort.

"All's well at home, Tilly?" he asked as he put her into his own chair.

"Yes, sir."

"And you do not come to me with any message, but to see me yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's nice. Now while you are talking to me, I will roast you an apple."

Matilda looked on with great curiosity and as great a sense of relief, while Mr. Richmond took out of a cupboard a plate of apples, chose a fine one with a good bit of stem, tied a long pack-thread to this, and then hung the apple by a loop at the other end of the string, to a hook in the woodwork over the fireplace. The apple, suspended in front of the blazing fire, began a succession of swift revolutions; first in one direction and then in the other, as the string twisted or untwisted.

"Did you ever roast an apple so?"

"No, Mr. Richmond."

"It is the best way in the world — when you haven't got any other."

"We haven't got that way at our house," said Matilda; "for we have no fires; nothing but stoves."

"You speak as if you thought fires were the best plan of the two."

"O, I do, Mr. Richmond! I do *not* like stoves at all. They're so close."

"I always thought stoves were rather

close," said Mr. Richmond. "Now what did you come to see me roast apples for, this afternoon? Did you come to keep your promise?"

"Yes, sir," Matilda answered rather faintly

"Are you sorry you made the promise?" Mr. Richmond inquired, looking at her. But the look was so pleasant, that Matilda's could not keep its solemnity. She had come in with a good deal.

"I don't know but I *was* sorry," she said.

"And you are not sorry now?"

"I think not."

"That is all the better. Now what did you want to say to me, Matilda?"

"You know you made me say I would come, Mr. Richmond."

"Did I? I think not. I do not think I *made* you say anything — do you think I did?"

"Well, you *asked* me, Mr. Richmond."

"Just what did I ask you?"

"You asked me if I would come and tell

you — you said you *wished* I would come and tell you — if" —

And Matilda made a great pause. The eyes of her friend seemed only to be watching the apple, yet perhaps they knew that her little lips were unsteady and were trying to get steady. He left his seat to attend to the roast; got a plate and put on the hearth under it; arranged the fire; then came and with his own hands removed Matilda's hood and loosened and threw back her cloak; and while he did this he repeated his question, in tones that were encouragement itself.

"I wished you would come and tell me if — if what?"

"Yes, Mr. Richmond, — if I thought I could not do something that I thought — I ought."

"Yes, I believe that was it, Tilly. Now, to begin with one thing at a time, what do you think you 'ought' to do?"

"Last night, I mean, Mr. Richmond; I mean, the night before last, at the meeting."

"I know. Well, what did you think then you ought to do?"

"Mr. Richmond, I think, I thought that I ought to rise up, when Maria and the others did."

"I knew you thought so. Why did you not, then, Matilda?"

"I couldn't."

"Do you know why you could not?"

Again there was difficulty of speech on the child's part. Mr. Richmond's saying that "he knew" she had had such feelings, was an endorsement to her conscience; and Matilda could not immediately get over a certain swelling in her throat, which threatened to put a stop to the conversation. The minister waited, and she struggled.

"Why could *you* not do what the others did, Matilda?"

"Mr. Richmond — I didn't want to do the things."

"What things? Bringing new scholars to the Sunday school, for instance?"

"O no, sir, I wouldn't mind doing *that*, or some other things either. But"—

"You mean, you do not want to pledge yourself to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"No, sir;"—after a pause, and low.

"Well, Tilly," said the minister, "I can only be very sorry for you. You keep yourself out of a great joy."

"But, Mr. Richmond," said Matilda, down whose cheeks quiet tears were now running, one after another, "don't you think I am very young yet to be a member of the church?"

"Do you think Jesus died for you, Tilly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you believe he loves you now?"

"Yes, sir."

"You understand all about that. Does *He* want you to be his obedient child and dear servant?"

"Yes, Mr. Richmond."

"You know all about that, too. Can you think of any reason why you should for an-

other year refuse to love him, refuse to mind him, and do all that your example and influence can do to keep others from loving and minding him? When He so loves and has loved you."

Tilly's little hands went up to her face now, and the room was very still; only the flames softly flickering in the fireplace, and the apple sputtering before the fire. Mr. Richmond did not say a word for several minutes.

"Mr. Richmond," said Matilda at last, "do you think anybody cares what I do? — when I am so little?"

"I think the Lord Jesus cares. He said nobody was to hinder the little children from coming to him. And I would rather be in his arms and have him bless me, if I were you, than be anywhere else, or have anything else. And so would you, Tilly."

"But, Mr. Richmond — it is because I am not good."

"Yes, I know it. But that is a reason for

giving yourself to the Lord Jesus. He will make you good; and there is no other way."

But Tilly's trouble at this got beyond management. She left her seat and came to Mr. Richmond, letting his arm draw her up to him, and dropping her head on his shoulder.

"O Mr. Richmond," she said, — "I don't know how!"

"Don't know how to give yourself to Jesus? Do it in your heart, Tilly. He is there. Tell him he may have you for his own child. He is at the door of your heart knocking; open the door and bid him come in. He will make it a glad place if you do."

"Mr. Richmond," said the child with great difficulty between her sobs, — "won't you tell him that I will?"

They kneeled down and the minister made a short prayer. But then he said, —

"Now, Tilly, I want you to tell the Lord yourself."

"I can't, Mr. Richmond"

"I think you can. And I want you to try."

They waited and waited. Tilly sobbed softly, but the minister waited still. At last Tilly's tears ceased; then with her little hands spread before her face, she said very slowly,—

"O Lord, I am a naughty child. I want to be good. I will do everything that you tell me. Please take my heart and make it all new, and help me to be strong and do right. Amen."

They rose up, but Mr. Richmond kept the child within his arm, where she had been standing.

"Now, Tilly, how do we know that our prayers are heard?"

"God has promised, hasn't he, Mr. Richmond?"

"Where? in what words?"

Tilly hesitated, and then repeated part of the verse, "Ask, and it shall be given you Seck, and ye shall find."

"And look here," said Mr. Richmond, half turning, so as to bring her and himself within reach of the Bible that lay at his elbow on the table, — "see here, Matilda. Read these words."

"'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.'"

"And here,"—

"'Whatsover ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.'"

"Does Jesus ever break his promises?"

"No, Mr. Richmond; he can't."

"Then remember that, whenever you think of to-day, and whenever you feel troubled or weak. *You* are weak, but he is strong; and he cannot break his promises. So you and I are safe, as long as we hold to him."

There was silence a little while, and Mr. Richmond set the apple to twirling again. It had untwisted its string and was hanging still.

"I am to put your name now, I sup-

pose, Tilly, among the names of our Band; am I?"

"Yes, Mr. Richmond."

"What work would you like specially to do?"

"I do not know, Mr. Richmond; I will think."

"Very well; that is right. And there is another place where your name ought to go —is there not?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Yes — among those who desire to be members of the church — to tell the world they are Christ's people."

"O no, Mr. Richmond!"

"Why 'O no, Mr. Richmond'?"

"I am not good enough. I want to be better first."

"How do you expect to get better?"

Silence.

"I suppose your thought is, that Jesus will make your heart new, as you asked him just now, and help you to be strong. Is that it?

— Yes. And you do not expect to accomplish the change or grow strong by your own power?"

"O no, sir."

"Don't you think Jesus loves you now as well as he will by and by, and is as ready to help you?"

"Yes, Mr. Richmond."

"Then, Tilly, I call it just distrust of him, to hold off from what he commands you to do, for fear he will not help you to do it. I would be ashamed to offer such an excuse to him."

"But — has he commanded *that*, Mr. Richmond?"

"He has commanded us to confess openly that we are his servants, hasn't he? and to be baptized in token of the change he has wrought in us, and as a sign that we belong to him? How can we do either the one or the other without joining the church?"

'I thought" — Matilda began, but seemingly did not like to tell what she had thought.

"Let us have it, Tilly," said her friend, drawing her closer to him. "You and I are talking confidentially, and it is best in those cases to talk all out. So what did you think?"

"I thought there were people who were the servants of Christ, and yet did not join any church," Matilda said softly.

"By not doing it, they as good as say to the world that they are not his servants. And the world judges accordingly. I have known people under such a delusion; but when they were honest, I have always known them to come out of it. If you give all you have to the Lord Jesus, you must certainly give your influence."

"But, I thought I might wait"— Tilly said again.

"Till when?"

"I don't know," she whispered.

"Wait for what?"

"Till I was more like what — I ought to be, Mr. Richmond."

"Till you were more like the Lord Jesus?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you not think the quickest way to grow like him would be to do and obey every word he says?"

Matilda bowed her head a little.

"You will be more likely to grow good and strong that way than any other; and I am sure the Lord will be more likely to help you if you trust him, than if you do not trust him."

"I think so too," Matilda assented.

"Then we will do everything, shall we, that we think our Lord would like to have us do? and we will trust him to help us through with it?" Mr. Richmond said, with an affectionate look at the child beside him; and Matilda met the look and answered it with another.

"But, Mr. Richmond"—

"What is it?"

"There is one question I should like to ask."

"Ask it."

"Why ought people to be baptized?"

Because our Lord commands it. Isn't that a good reason?"

"Yes, sir; but— what does it mean, Mr. Richmond?"

"It is a way of saying to the world, that we have left it, and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a way of saying to the world, that his blood has washed away our sins and his Spirit has made our hearts clean; or that we trust him to do both things for us. And it is the appointed way of saying all this to the world; *his* appointed way. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now do you not think that those who love the Lord Jesus, ought to be glad to follow his will in this matter?"

"Yes, sir," Matilda said again, raising her eyes frankly to Mr. Richmond's face.

"Would you be willing to be left out, when next I baptize some of those who wish

to make it publicly known that they are Christ's?"

"No, sir." And presently she added. "When will that be, Mr. Richmond?"

"I do not know," he answered thoughtfully. "Not immediately. You and I must have some more talks before that time."

"You are very good to me, Mr. Richmond," Matilda said gratefully.

"Have we said all we ought to say this time? Are there any more questions to bring up?"

"*I* haven't any to bring up," Matilda said.

"Is all clear, that we have been talking about?"

"I think so."

"Now will you be good to me, and stay and take supper with me? That knock at the door means that Miss Redwood would like to have me know that supper is ready. And you shall have this apple we have been roasting."

"Mr. Richmond, I think mamma would be frightened if I did not go home."

"She does not know where you are?"

"Nobody knows," said Matilda.

"Then it won't do to let you stay. You shall come another time, and we will roast another apple, — won't you?"

"I should like to come," said Matilda. "Mr. Richmond, — didn't you say you were going to talk to the Band and explain things, when we have our meetings?"

"I did say so. What do you want explained?"

"Some time, — I would like to know just all it means, to be a servant of Christ."

"All it means," said Mr. Richmond. "Well, it means a good deal, Tilly. I think we had better begin there with our explanations. I shall not make it a lecture; it will be more like a class; so you may ask as many questions as you please."

CHAPTER VI.

THE light of day was darkening fast, as Matilda ran home. Even the western sky gave no glow, when she reached her own gate and went in. After all, she had run but a very little way, in her first hurry; the rest of the walk was taken with sober steps.

When she came downstairs, she found the lamp lit and all the young heads of the family clustering together to look at something. It was Anne's purchase, she found; Anne had spent her aunt's gift in the purchase of a new silk dress; and she was displaying it.

"It is a lovely colour," said Maria. "I think that shade of — what do you call it? — is just the prettiest in the world. What *do*

you call it, Clarissa? and where did you get it, Anne?"

"It is pearl gray," said Clarissa.

"I would have got blue, while I was about it," said Letitia; "there is nothing like blue; and it becomes you, Anne. You ought to have got blue. I would have had one dress that suited me, if I was you, if I never had another."

"This will suit me, I think," said Anne.

"Aren't you going to trim it with anything? Dresses are so much trimmed now a-days; and this colour will not be anything unless you trim it."

Anne replied by producing the trimming. The exclamations of delight and approval lasted for several minutes.

"What are you going to get, Letitia?" Maria asked.

"I have not decided."

"I don't know but I will have a watch," said Maria. "You can get a very good

silver watch, a really good one, you know for twenty-five dollars."

"But a silver watch!" said Anne. "I would not wear anything but a gold watch."

"How am I going to get a gold watch, I should like to know?" said Maria. "I think it would be splendid."

"But what do you want of a watch, Maria?" her little sister asked.

"O, here is Matilda coming out! Just like her! Not a word about Anne's dress; and now she says, what do I want with a watch. Why, what other people want with one; I want to see the time of day."

"I don't think you do," said Matilda. "When do you?"

"Why, I should like to know in school, when it is recess time; and at home, when it is time to go to school."

"But the bell rings," said Matilda.

"Well, I don't always hear the bell, child."

"But when you don't hear it, I tell you."

"Yes, and it's very tiresome to have you

telling me, too. I'd rather have my own watch. But I don't know what I will have; sometimes I think I'll just buy summer dresses, and then for once I'd have a plenty. I do like to have plenty of anything. And there's a necklace and earrings at Mr. Kurtz's that I want. Such lovely earrings!"

"Well, Matilda, what *are* you thinking of?" Letitia burst forth. "Such a face! One would think it was wicked to wear earrings. What is it, you queer child?"

But Matilda did not say what she was thinking of. The elder ladies came in, and the party adjourned to the tea-table.

A few hours later, when the girls had gone to their room, Matilda asked,—

"When are you going to look for new scholars, Maria?"

"*What?*" was Maria's energetic and not very graceful response.

"When are you going to look for some new scholars to bring to the school?"

"The Sunday school!" said Maria. "I

thought you meant the school where we go every day. I don't know."

"You promised you would try."

"Well, so I will, when I see any I *can* bring."

"But don't you think you ought to go and look for them?"

"How can I, Tilly? I don't know where to go; and I haven't got time, besides."

"I think I know where we could go," said Matilda, "and maybe we could get one, at any rate. Don't you know the Dows' house? on the turnpike road? — beyond the bridge ever so far?"

"The Dows'!" said Maria. "Yes, I know the Dows' house; but who's there? Nothing but old folks."

"Yes, there are two children; I have seen them; two or three; but they don't come to school."

"Then I don't believe they want to," said Maria; "they could come if they wanted to, I am sure."

"Don't you think we might go and ask them? Perhaps they would come if anybody asked them."

"Yes, we might," said Maria; "but, you see, Tilly, I haven't any time. It'll take me every bit of time I can get between now and Sunday to finish putting the braid on that frock; you have no idea how much time it takes. It curls round this way, and then twists over that way, and then gives two curls, so, and so; and it takes a great while to do it. I almost wish I had chosen an easier pattern; only this is so pretty."

"But you promised, Maria."

"I didn't promise to go and look up people, child. I only promised to do what I could. Besides, what have *you* got to do with it? You did not promise at all."

"I will go with you, if you will go up to the Dows'," said Matilda.

"O, well! — don't worry, and I'll see about it."

"But will you go? Come, Maria, let us go."

"When?"

"Any afternoon. To-morrow."

"What makes you want to go?" said Maria looking at her.

"I think you *ought* to go," Matilda answered demurely.

"And I say, what have you got to do with it? I don't see what particular concern of mine the Dows' are, anyhow."

Matilda sat a long while thinking after this speech. She was on the floor, pulling off her stockings and unlacing her boots; and while her fingers moved slowly, drawing out the laces, her cogitations were very busy. What concern *were* the Dows', of hers or Maria's? They were not pleasant people to go near, she judged, from the look of their house and dooryard as she had seen it in passing; and the uncombed, fly-away head of the little girl gave her a shudder as she remembered it. They were not people that were often seen in church; they could not be good; maybe they used bad language; certainly they could not

be expected to know how to "behave." Slowly the laces were pulled out of Matilda's boots, and her face grew into portentous gravity.

"Aren't you coming to bed?" said Maria. "What can you be thinking of?"

"I am thinking of the Dows'?"

"What about them? I never thought about them three times in my life."

"But oughtn't we to think about people, Maria?"

"Nice people."

"I mean, people that are not nice."

"It will be new times when you do," said Maria. "Come! let the Dows' alone and come to bed."

"Maria," said her little sister as she obeyed this request, "I was thinking, that Jesus thought about people that were not nice."

"Well?" said Maria. "Do lie down! what is the use of getting into bed, if you are going to sit bolt upright like that and talk lectures? I don't see what has got into you."

"Maria, it seems to me, now I think of it,

that those were the particular people he did care about."

"Don't you think he cared about good people?" said Maria indignantly.

"But they were not good at first. Nobody was good at first — till he made them good. He *said* he didn't come to the good people; don't you remember?"

"Well, what do you mean by all that? Are *we* not to care for anybody but the people that are not good? A nice life we should have of it!"

"Maria," said her little sister very thoughtfully, "I wonder what sort of a life He had?"

"Tilly!" said Maria, rising up in her turn, "what has come to you? What book have you been reading? I shall tell mamma."

"I have not been reading any book," said Matilda.

"Then lie down and quit talking. How do you expect I am going to sleep?"

"Let us go and see what we can do at the Dows', Maria! to-morrow. Won't you?"

But Maria either did not or would not hear; so the matter passed for that night. But the next day Matilda brought it up again. Maria found excuses to put her off. Matilda, however, was not to be put off permanently; she never forgot; and day after day the subject came up for discussion, until Maria at last consented.

"I am going because you tease me so, Tilly," she said as they set forth from the gate. "Just for that and nothing else. I don't like it a bit."

"But you promised."

"I didn't."

"To bring in new scholars?"

"I did not promise I would bring the Dow children; and I don't believe they'll come."

The walk before the children was not long, and yet it almost took them out of the village. They passed the corner this time without turning, keeping the road, which was indeed part of the great high road which took Shadywalk in its way, as it took many another

village. The houses in this direction soon began to scatter further apart from each other. They were houses of more pretension, too, with grounds and gardens and fruit trees about them; and built in styles that were notable, if not according to any particular rule. Soon the ground began to descend sharply towards the bed of a brook, which brawled along with impetuous waters towards a mill somewhere out of sight. It was a full, fine stream, mimicking the rapids and eddies of larger streams, with all their life and fury given to its smaller current. The waters looked black and wintry in contrast with the white snow of the shores. A foot-bridge spanned the brook, alongside of another bridge for carriages; and just beyond, the black walls of a ruin showed where another fine mill had once stood. That mill had been burnt. It was an old story; the girls did not so much as think about it now. Matilda's glance had gone the other way, where the stream rushed along from under the bridge and hurried down a

winding glen, bordered by a road that seemed well traversed. A house could be seen down the glen, just where the road turned in company with the brook and was lost to view.

"I wonder who lives down there," said Matilda.

"I don't know. Yes, I do, too; but I have forgotten."

"I wonder if they come to church."

"I don't know *that;* and I shall not go to ask them. Why Matilda, you never cared before whether people went to church."

"Don't you care now?" was Matilda's rejoinder.

"No! I don't care. I don't know those people. They may go to fifty churches, for aught I can tell."

"But Maria,"— said her little sister.

"What?"

"I do not understand you."

"Very likely. *That* isn't strange."

"But Maria,—you promised the other night— O Maria, what things you promised!"

"What then?" said Maria. "What do you mean? What did I promise?"

"You promised you would be a servant of Christ," Matilda said anxiously.

"Well, what if I did?" said Maria. "Of course I did; what then. Am I to find out whether everybody in Shadywalk goes to church, because I promised that? It is not my business."

"Whose business is it?"

"It is Mr. Richmond's business — and Mr. Everett's business; and Mr. Schönflocker's business. I don't see what makes it mine."

"Then you ought not to have said that you would bring new scholars to the school, I think, if you did not mean to do it; and whom do you mean to carry the message to, Maria? You said you would carry the message."

"I don't know what carrying the message means," said Maria.

Matilda let the question drop, and they went on their way in silence; rising now by

another steep ascent on the other side of the brook, having crossed the bridge. The hill was steep enough to give their lungs play without talking. At the top of the hill the road forked; one branch turned off southwards; the high road turned east; the sisters followed this. A little way further, and both slackened their steps involuntarily as the house they were going to came full in view.

It was like a great many others; brown with the weather, and having a certain forlorn look that a house gets when there are no loving eyes within it to care how it looks. The doors did not hang straight; the windows had broken panes; a tub here and a broken pitcher there stood in sight of every passer by. A thin wreath of smoke curled up from the chimney, so it was certain that people lived there; but nothing else looked like it. The girls went in through the rickety gate. Over the house the bare branches of a cherry tree gave no promise of summery bloom; and some tufts of brown stems stand-

ing up from the snow hardly suggested the gay hollyhocks of the last season. The two girls slackened their steps yet more, and seemed not to know very well how to go on.

"I don't like it, Tilly," Maria said. "I have a mind to give it up."

"O I wouldn't, Maria," the little one replied; but she looked puzzled and doubtful.

"Well, suppose they don't want to see us in here? it don't look as if they did."

"We can try, Maria; it will do no harm to try."

"I don't know that," said Maria. "I'll never come such an errand again, Matilda; never! I give you notice of that. What shall I do? Knock?"

"I suppose so."

Maria knocked. The next minute the upper half of the door was opened and an oldish woman looked out. A dirty woman, with her hair all in fly-away order and her dress very slatternly as well as soiled.

"What do you want?"

"Are there some children here?" Maria began.

"Children? yes, there's children here. There's my children."

"Do they go to school?"

"Has somebody been stealin' something and you want to know if it's my children have done it?" said the woman. "'Cos they don't go to no school that *you* ever see."

"I did not mean any such thing," said Maria, quite taken aback.

"Well, what *did* you mean?" the woman asked sharply.

"We want to see the children," Matilda put in. "May we come in and get warm, if you please?"

The woman still held the door in her hand, and looked at the last speaker from head to foot; then half reluctantly opened the door.

"I don't know as it'll hurt you to come in," she said; "but it won't do you much good; the place is all in a clutter and it always is. Come along in, if you want to! and shut the

door; 'tain't so warm here you'll need the wind in to help you. Want the children, did you say? what do you want of 'em?"

Matilda thought privately that the wind would have been a good companion after all; no sooner was the door shut, than all remembrance of fresh air faded away. An inexpressible atmosphere filled the house, in which frying fat, smoke, soapsuds, and the odour of old garments, mingled and combined in proportions known to none but such dwelling places. Yet it was not as bad as it might have been, by many degrees; the house was a little frame house, open at the joints; and it stood in the midst of heaven's free air; all the winds that came from the mountains and the river swept over and around it; came down the chimney sometimes, and breathed blessed breaths through every opening door and shackling window frame. But to Matilda it seemed as bad as could be. So it seemed to her eyes too. Nothing clean; nothing comfortable; nothing in order; scraps of

dinner on the floor; scraps of work under the table; a dirty cat in the corner by the stove; a wash tub occupying the other corner. The woman had her sleeves rolled up, and now plung d her arms into the tub again.

"Y ɔu can put in a stick of wood, if you want to," she said; "I guess the fire's got down. What did you come here for, hey? I hain't heard that yet, and I'm in a takin' to find out."

"We thought maybe your children might like to go to Sunday school," said Maria with a great deal of trepidation; "and we just came to ask them. That's all."

"How did ye know but they went already?" the woman asked, looking at Maria from the corner of her eye.

"I didn't know. I just came to ask them."

"Well, I just advise you not to mix yourself with people's affairs till you *do* know a little about 'em. What business is it o' yourn, hey, whether my children goes to Sunday

school? Sunday school! what a poke it is!"

"They did not come to *our* Sunday school," said Matilda, for her sister was nonplussed; "and we would like to have them come; unless they were going somewhere else."

"They may speak for themselves," said Mrs. Dow; and she opened an inner door and called in a shrill voice — "Araminty! — Jemimy! — Alexander! — come right along down, and if you don't I'll whip ye."

She went back to her washing-tub, and Maria and Matilda looked to see three depressed specimens of young human life appear at that inner door; but first tumbled down and burst in a sturdy, rugged young rascal of some eight or nine years; and after him a girl a little older, with the blackest of black eyes and hair, the latter hanging straight over her face and ears. The eyes of both fastened upon their strange visiters, and seemed as if they would move no more.

"Them girls is come to get you to their

Sunday school," said the mother. "Don't you want for to go?"

No answer, and no move of the black eyes. Matilda certainly thought they looked as if they feared the lifting of no mortal hand, their mother's or any other.

"Would you like to go to Sunday school?" inquired Maria politely, driven to speak by the necessities of the silence. But she might as well have asked Mrs. Dow's wash tub. The mother laughed a little to herself.

"Guess you might as well go along back the road ye come!" she said. "You won't get my Araminty Jemimy into no Sunday school o' yourn this time. Maybe when she's growed older and wiser-like, she'll come and see you. She don' know what a Sunday school's like. She thinks it's some sort of a trap."

"I ain't afraid!" spoke out black eyes.

"I didn't say you was," said her mother. "I might ha' said you was cunnin' enough to keep your foot out of it."

"It is not a trap," said Matilda boldly. "It is a pleasant place, where we sing, and learn nice things."

"My children don't want to learn none o' your nice things," said the woman. "I can teach 'em to home."

"But you don't!" said black eyes. "You don't *never* learn us *nothing!*"

There was not the slightest sweet desire of learning evidenced in this speech. It breathed nothing but defiance.

"Alexander, won't *you* come?" said Matilda timidly, as her sister moved to the door. For Maria's courage gave out. But at that question the young urchin addressed set up a roar of hoarse laughter, throwing himself down and rolling over on the floor. His mother shoved him out of her way with a push that was very like a kick, and his sister seizing a wringing wet piece of clothes from the wash tub, dropped it spitefully on his head. There was promise of a fight; and Matilda and Maria hurried out. They has-

tened their steps through the garden, and even out in the high road they ran a little to get away from Mrs. Dow's neighborhood.

"Well!" said Maria, "what do you think now, Tilly? I hope you have got enough for once of this kind of thing. I promise you I have."

"Hush!" said Matilda. "Some one is calling."

They stopped and turned. A shout was certainly sent after them from the gate they had quitted; — "Girls, hollo! — Sunday school girls, hollo!"

"Do you hear?" said Matilda.

"Sunday school girls! — Come back!"

"What can they want?" said Maria.

"We must go see," said Matilda.

So they went towards the gate again. By the gate they could soon see the shock head of Alexander; he had got rid of the wash tub and his mother and his sister all three; and he was waiting there to speak to them. The girls hurried up again till they con-

fronted his grinning face on the other side of the gate.

"What do you want?" said Maria. "What do you call us back for?"

"I didn't call you," said the boy.

"Yes, you did; you called us back; and we have come back all this way. What do you want to say?"

Alexander's face was dull, even in his triumph. No sparkle or gleam of mischief prepared the girls for his next speech.

"I say — ain't you green!"

But another shout of rude laughter followed it; and another roll and tumble, though these last were on the snow. Maria and her sister turned and walked away till out of hearing.

"I never heard of such horrible people!" said Maria; "never! And this is what you get, Matilda, by your dreadful going after Sunday scholars and such things. I do hope you have got enough of it."

But Matilda only drew deep sighs, one

after another, at intervals, and made no reply.

"Don't you see what a goose you are?" persisted Maria. "Don't you see?"

"No," said Matilda. "I don't see that."

"Well, you might. Just look at what a time we have had, only because you fancied there were two children at that house."

"Well, there *are* two children."

"Such children!" said Maria.

"I wish Mr. Richmond would go to see them," said Matilda.

"It would be no use for Mr. Richmond or anybody to go and see them," said Maria. "They are too wicked."

"But you cannot tell beforehand," said Matilda.

"And so I say, Tilly, the only way is to keep out of such places. I hope you'll be content now."

Matilda was hardly content; for the sighs kept coming every now and then. So they went down the hill again, and over the bridge,

past the glen and the burnt mill, and began to go up on the other side. Now across the way, at the top of the bank that overhung the dell, there stood a house of more than common size and elegance, in the midst of grounds that seemed to be carefully planted. A fine brick wall enclosed these grounds on the road-side, and at the top of the hill an iron gate gave entrance to them.

"O Tilly," exclaimed Maria, "the Lardners' gate is open. Look! Suppose we go in."

"I should not like to go in," said the little one.

"Why not? There's nobody at home; they haven't come yet; and it's such a good chance. You know, Clarissa says that people have leave to go into people's great places and see them, in England, where she has been."

"But this is not a great place, and we have not leave," urged Matilda.

"O well, I'm going in. Come! we'll just

go in for a minute. It's no harm. Come! just for a minute."

Matilda, however, stopped at the gate, and stood there waiting for her sister; while Maria stepped in cautiously and made her way as far as the front of the house. Here she turned and beckoned to Matilda to join her; but the little one stood fast.

"What does she want of you?" a voice asked at her elbow. Matilda started. Two ladies were there.

"She beckoned for me to go in where she is," said Matilda.

"Well, why don't you go in?"

The voice was kindly; the face of the lady was bending towards her graciously; but who it was, Matilda did not know.

"We have no leave to go in," she said. "I do not like to be there."

"I dare say the people would let you come in, if they knew you wished it."

"They do not know," said Matilda.

"What a charming child!" said the lady

apart to her companion. "My dear," she went on to Matilda, "will you come in on my invitation? This is my house, and you are welcome. I shall be as glad to see you as you to see the place. Come!"

And she took Matilda's hand and led her in.

Just at the crown of the bank the house stood, and from here the view was very lovely, even now in winter. Over the wide river, which lay full in view with its ice covering, to the opposite shores and the magnificent range of mountains, which from Matilda's window at home she could just see in a little bit. The full range lay here before the eye, white with snow, coloured and brightened by the sinking sun which threw wonderful lights across them and revealed beautiful depths and shadows. Still, cold, high, far-off; their calm majesty held Matilda's eye.

"Are you looking at the mountains?" said the lady. "Yes, now come in and you shall look at my flowers. Your sister may come too," she added, nodding kindly to Maria; but

she kept Matilda's hand, and so led her first upon the piazza, which was a single step above the ground, then into the hall. An octagon hall, paved with marble, and with large white statues holding post around its walls, and a vase of flowers on the balustrade at the foot of the staircase. But those were not the flowers the lady had meant; she passed on to one of the inner rooms and from that to another, and finally into a pretty greenhouse, with glass windows looking out to the mountains and the river, filled on this side of the windows with tropical bloom. While the girls gazed in wonder, the lady stepped back into the room they had left, and threw off her wrappings. When she came again to the girls in the greenhouse they hardly knew which to look at, her or the flowers; her dress and whole appearance were so unlike anything they had ever seen.

"Which do you like best?" she said. "The roses you know, of course; these are camellias, — and these — and these red ones too; all

camellias; these are myrtle; these are heath; these are geraniums. All those are geraniums. This is Eupatorium — those, yes, those are Azaleas, and those, — and all those. Yes, all Azaleas. You like them? This is Bigonia. — What do you like best?"

It was a long while before Matilda could divide and define her admiration enough to tell what she liked best. Carnations and heath were found at last to have her best favour. The lady cut a bouquet for her with plenty of carnations and heath, but a variety of other beauty too; then led the girls into the other room and offered them some rich cake and a glass of what Matilda supposed to be wine. She took the cake and refused the cordial.

"It is very sweet," said the lady. "You will not dislike it; and it will warm you, this cold afternoon."

"I may not drink wine, ma'am, thank you," Matilda answered.

"It is not wine. Does it make you sick,

my dear? Are you afraid to try it? Your sister is not afraid. I think it will do you good."

Being thus reassured, Matilda put the glass to her lips, but immediately set it down again.

"You do not like it?" said the lady.

"I like it; but—it is strong?" said Matilda inquiringly.

"Why yes, it would not be good for anything if it were not strong. Never mind that —if you like it. The glass does not hold but a thimbleful and a thimbleful will not hurt you. Why, why not, my dear?"

Matilda looked up, and coloured and hesitated.

"I have promised not," she said.

"So solemnly?" said the lady laughing. "Is it your mother you have promised?"

"No, ma'am."

"Not your mother? You have a mother?"

"O yes, ma'am."

"Would she have any objection?"

"No, ma'am,—I believe not."

"Then whom have you made your promise to? Is it a religious scruple that some one has taught you?"

"I have promised to do all I could for helping temperance work," Matilda said at last.

She was answered with a little ringing laugh, not unkindly but amused; and then her friend said gravely,—

"Your taking a glass of cordial in this house would not affect anything or anybody, little one. It would do *me* no harm. I drink a glass of wine every day with my dinner. I shall go on doing it just the same. It will not make a bit of difference to me, whether you take your cordial or not."

But Matilda looked at the lady, and did not look at her glass.

"Do you think it will?" said the lady laughing.

"No, ma'am."

"Then your promise to help temperance work does not touch the cordial."

"No ma'am, but"—

"But? — what 'but'?"

"It touches me."

"Does it?" said the lady. "That is odd. You think a promise is a promise. Here is your sister taking her cordial; she has not made the same promise, I suppose?"

Maria and Matilda glanced at each other.

"She *has?*" cried the lady. "Yet you see she does not think as you do about it."

The sisters did not look into each other's eyes again. Their friend watched them both.

"I should like to know whom you have made such a promise to," she said coaxingly to Matilda. "Somebody that you love well enough to make you keep it. Won't you tell me? It is not your mother, you said. To whom did you make that promise, dear?"

Matilda hesitated and looked up into the lady's face again.

"I promised — the Lord Jesus," she said.

"Good patience! she's religious!" the lady exclaimed, with a change coming over her face; Matilda could not tell what it was, only

it did not look like displeasure. But she was graver than before, and she pressed the cordial no more; and at parting she told Matilda she must certainly come and see her again, and she should always have a bunch of flowers to pay her. So the girls went home, saying nothing at all to each other by the way

CHAPTER VII.

IT was tea-time at home by the time they got there. All during the meal, Maria held forth upon the adventures of the afternoon, especially the last.

"Mamma, those people are somebody," she concluded.

"I hope I am somebody," said Mrs. Englefield.

"O but you know what I mean, mamma."

"I am not clear that I do."

"And I, Maria,—am I not somebody?" her aunt asked.

"Well, we're all *somebody*, of course, in one sense. Of course we're not *nobody*."

"I am not so sure what you think about it," said Mrs. Candy. "I think that

in your language, who isn't somebody, is nobody."

"O well, we're *somebody*," said Maria. "But if you could see the splen–did bunch of jewels that hung at Mrs. Laval's breast, you would know I say the truth."

"Now we are getting at Maria's meaning," observed Clarissa.

"I have no bunch of jewels hanging at my breast," said Mrs. Englefield; "if *that* is what she means by 'somebody.'"

"How large a bunch was it Maria?" her aunt asked.

"And is it certain that Maria's eyes could tell the true from the false, in such a matter as a bunch of jewellery?" suggested Clarissa. "They have not had a great deal of experience."

Maria fired up. "I just wish you could see them for yourself!" she said. "False jewels, indeed! They sparkle like flashes of lightning. All glittering and flashing, red and white. I never saw anything so beau-

tiful in all my life. And if you saw the rest of the dress, you would know that they couldn't be false jewels."

"What sort of a face had she?"

"I don't know, — handsome."

"The bunch of jewels dazzled Maria's eyes," said Clarissa sipping her tea.

"No, not handsome, Maria," Matilda said.

"Well, not handsome exactly, but pleasant. She had curls, and lightish hair; but her dress was so handsome, it made her look handsome. She took a *terrible* fancy to Matilda."

"Matilda is the youngest," said her mother.

"It was thanks to Matilda we got into the house at all; and Matilda had the flowers. Nobody spoke of giving me any flowers."

"Well, you know you do not care for them," interposed Matilda.

"Mamma, those people are somebody — I can tell you!"

"You speak as if there were nobody else in Shadywalk, Maria, that is anybody."

"Well, aunt Candy, I don't know any people like these."

"Maria, you talk nonsense," said her mother.

"Mamma, it is just what aunt Erminia would say herself, if she knew the people."

"What makes anybody 'somebody,' I should like to know? and what do you mean by it? Am I nobody, because I cannot wear red and white jewels at my throat?"

"It wasn't at her throat at all, mamma; it was just here — on her waist."

"A bouquet de corsage," said Clarissa. "The *waist*, as you call it, is at the belt."

"Well, I am not a mantua-maker," said Maria.

"No more than we are somebody," said Mrs. Candy.

"Well, you know what I mean," said Maria; "and you all think exactly the same. There is nobody else in Shadywalk that dresses so, or that has such flowers, or that has such a house."

"Who are they, these people that she talks of?" Mrs. Candy asked.

"They have lately bought the place. I know nothing about them. They were here for a little while in the summer; but only to turn everything upside down in the house and grounds, and make changes. I cannot imagine what has brought them here, to the country, in the depth of winter. They had nothing to do with anybody in Shadywalk, that I know of. Perhaps they will, now they have got in order. I believe they have lived out of America a good deal."

"Is that what you mean by 'somebody,' Maria?" her aunt asked. "Perhaps I am 'somebody,' according to that."

Maria's thoughts would not bear to be spoken, it seemed, for she did not speak them; and it must be a strong reason that kept Maria's opinions to herself. However, the family found something else to talk about, and Mrs. Laval was not mentioned again till Maria and Matilda went

up to bed. Then Matilda had something to say.

"Maria," she began with judicial gravity, "what was that Mrs. Laval gave us to drink?"

"I don't know," said Maria; "but it was the best thing I ever tasted in all my life. It was some sort of wine, I guess; it was strong enough. But it was sweet; O it was nice!"

"And you drank it!"

"I guess I did! I only wished there was more of it."

"But, Maria!—"

"Well, what, 'Maria'?"

"You promised, Maria, that you would do all you could for temperance work."

"What then? I could not do anything for temperance *there*, child. As Mrs. Laval said."

"You needn't have drunk the wine."

"Why shouldn't I? Mrs. Laval gave it to me; I couldn't be rude."

"But that is not keeping your promise."

"I made no promise about it. I could do

nothing in the world for temperance *there*, Tilly. What would Mrs. Laval care for anything *I* should say?"

"But, Maria!" said her little sister looking puzzled and troubled at once, —"you cannot drink wine in one place, and try to hinder people from drinking it in another place."

"Why can't I? It all depends on the place, Tilly, and the people."

"And the wine, I suppose," said Matilda severely.

"Yes!" said Maria boldly, "I dare say, if all wine was like that, Mr. Richmond would have no objection to it."

"I don't see, Maria," said her sister, "what you made those promises for, the other night. I think you ought not to have got up at all; it was the same as speaking; and if you do not mean to keep promises you should not make them."

"And what have you got to do with it?" said Maria in her turn. "You did *not* stand up with the rest of us; you have no business

to lecture other people that are better than yourself. I am going to keep all the promises I ever made; but I did not engage to go poking into Mrs. Dow's wash kitchen, nor to be rude to Mrs. Laval; and I don't mean to do the one or the other, I give you notice."

Matilda drew another of the long breaths that had come so many times that afternoon, and presently remarked that she was glad the next meeting of the Band would come in a few days.

Maria sharply inquired "Why?"

"Because," said Matilda, "I hope Mr. Richmond will talk to us. I don't understand about things."

"Of course you don't!" said Maria; "and if I were you I would not be so wise, till I did 'understand.'"

Matilda got into bed, and Maria sat down to finish putting the braid on her dress.

"Tilly, what are you going to get with your twenty-five dollars?"

"I don't know yet."

"I don't know whether I shall get a watch, or a dress, like Anne; or something else. What would you?"

"I don't know."

"What *are* you going to get with your money, Matilda?"

"I can't tell, Maria. I know what I am going to do with part; but I don't know what I am going to do with the other part."

Maria could get no more from her.

Nothing new happened in the family before the evening came for what Maria called the "Band meeting." Matilda went about between home and the school extremely quiet and demure, and reserved rather more than ordinary; but reserve was Matilda's way. Only Maria knew, and it irritated her, that her little sister was careful to lock herself up alone with her Bible, or rather with somebody else's Bible, for Matilda had none of her own, for a good long time every morning and evening. Maria thought sometimes she knew of her doing the same thing at the noon recess.

She said nothing, but she watched. And her watching made her certain of it. Matilda unlocked her door and came out always with a face of quiet seriousness and a spirit in armour. Maria could not provoke her (and she tried); nor could any other temptations or difficulties, that she could see, shake a certain steady gentleness with which Matilda went through them. Matilda was never a passionate child, but she had been pleasure-loving and wayward. That was changing now; and Matilda was giving earnest care to her school work

The desired evening for the "Band meeting" came, and the young people all went duly to the lecture room; though Maria reminded her sisters that they did not belong there. Letitia and Anne chose to go in spite of that fact. The room, though not full, was filled towards the upper end; so the party were divided, and it happened that Matilda placed herself apart from her sisters, in the front, at the end of a seat near to Mr. Richmond. He was there already, standing by the little desk.

After the prayer and singing, Mr. Richmond declared that they were come together for a talk; and he meant to make it a talk. He should ask questions, when he chose; and everybody else might exercise the same liberty.

"We are going to try to understand things," he said; "and by that somewhat vague expression I mean things connected with our covenant, that we have made, and the work we have undertaken. Our covenant begins with the words, 'We are the servants of Christ.' Let us know exactly what we mean. What is it to be a servant of Christ? What is a servant, in the first place?"

There was hesitation; then an answer from somewhere, — "He is somebody who does what he is told."

'That would be a good servant," said Mr. Richmond smiling; "but it will do. He is one who acts under the will of another, doing the work of another. A servant of Christ — what does he do? — and how does he do it?"

There was no answer this time.

"Let us look," said Mr. Richmond. "In the first verse of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, Paul calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ; and in the ninth verse he says that he serves 'with his spirit." Here is a mark. The service of Christ, you see, is in the first instance not outward, but inward. Not hand work, nor lip work, nor money giving; but service *in the spirit.* What is that?

"It is having your will the same with God's will.

"So now look and see. We all pledged ourselves the other night to do a great many sorts of outward service; good in themselves, and right and needful to do. But the first question is, Are we ourselves the servants of Christ? Do we in heart love and obey and agree to his will? If we are not doing that, or trying to do it, our other service is no service at all. It is a lie, and no service at all. Or it is service of ourselves."

Mr. Richmond paused a little.

"I have no reason to think that any of you

did not mean true service, when the pledge was given the other night. So now let us see how this true service shews itself.

"Jesus said, you remember, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me.' All we have to ask is, How did the Lord himself walk, that we should follow him? I recommend you to study the story of his life very carefully and very constantly, and be continually getting new lessons from it. But now let us look just at one or two points.

"Jesus said, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.' Has he commanded us to be anything like that?"

One of the boys answered, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"How can our light shine?"

"Doing good," another boy answered.

"Being good," said one of the girls.

"Very well; but what is there in doing and

being good which has any resemblance to light? What does light do?"

"It shews things," a boy said.

"There's no darkness where the light comes," said a little girl.

"Quite true; but how does our doing good and being good, 'shew things'? What does it shew?"

After a little hesitation a voice replied, "It shews what is right."

"It shews what people ought to do," a boy said.

"It shews what is the will of God about us," said Mr. Richmond; "and the more exactly we are obedient to that will and conformed to it, the more brightly do we give light. And do you see? our light-giving depends on what we *are*. We give no light, except just so far as we are ourselves what God wills us to be. And then it shines out in all sorts of ways. I knew a little girl whose eyes were like two pure lamps, always; they were so loving and clear and true. I have

known several people whose voices gave light as much as harmony; they were so sweet with the tones of a glad heart and a conscience at peace. I have seen faces that shone, almost like angel faces, with the love of God and the joy of heaven and the love of their fellow-men. Now this is the first thing the Lord calls us to be in his service,—his light-bearers. The light comes from him; we must get it from him; and then we must shine! And of course our actions give light too, if they are obedient to the will of God. A boy who keeps the Sabbath holy is almost as good as a sermon to a boy who doesn't. One who refuses to touch the offered glass of wine, shews the light to another who drinks it. A loving answer shames a harsh spirit; and a child faithful to her duties at school is a beacon of truth to her fellows.

"There is one thing more; and then I will talk to you no longer this evening. Jesus said, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' His servants must

follow him. Now, how much are you willing to do — how far are you willing to go — to accomplish what he came, and lived, and died for? and how will you set about it?"

There was a long silence here; until Mr. Richmond urged that an answer should be given. Then at last somebody suggested,

"Bringing new scholars to school?"

"That is one thing to be done certainly; and a very good thing. What else can we attempt? Remember, — it is to seek and to save the *lost!*"

"We might carry tracts," another suggested.

"You might; and if they are good tracts, and given with a kind word, and followed with a loving prayer, they will not be carried in vain. But to whom will you take them, Frank?"

"Might take them to the boys in the school," Frank thought.

"Where else?"

"Might drop 'em around the corner," Mrs. Rice said.

"Don't *drop* them anywhere, where it is possible to give them," Mr. Richmond replied. "Do not ever be, or seem, ashamed of your wares. Give lovingly to almost anybody, and the gift will not be refused; if you choose the time and place wisely. Take people when they are alone, as much as you can. But the *lost*, remember. Who are the lost?"

Silence; then a voice spoke,—

"People who don't come to church."

"It is a bad sign when people do not come to church," said Mr. Richmond. "Still, we may not make that an absolute test. Some people are sick and unable to come; some are deaf and unable to hear if they did come; some are so poor they have not decent clothes. Some live where there are no churches. Who are the *lost?*"

"People who are not going to heaven," one little girl answered.

"People who are not good," another said

"People who swear," said a boy.

"Those people who do not love Jesus Christ," was the answer of the fourth.

"That sums it all up," said Mr. Richmond "Those who do not know the Lord Jesus.—They are out of the way to heaven; they have never trusted in his blood for forgiveness; they are not good, for they have not got his help to make them good; and if they do not swear and do other dreadful things, it is only because the temptation is wanting. They are the lost. Now, does not every one of you know some friend or acquaintance, who is a lost one? some brother or sister perhaps; or mother or father, or cousin or neighbour, who does not love Jesus the Lord? Those are the very first people for us to seek. Then, outside of those nearest ones, there is a whole world lost. Let us go after all, but especially those who have few to look after them."

"It is harder to speak to those you know, than to those you don't know," Mrs. Trembleton said.

"No matter. Jesus said, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple.' Let us go to the hardest cases."

"Are not tracts best to use with them?" Mrs. Swan asked.

"Use tracts or not, according to circumstances. Your own voice is often better than a tract, if it has the right ring to it. When

> 'Tis joy, not duty,
> To speak his beauty.'

"Speak *that* as often and wherever you can. And 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' Now I have done asking questions, and you may ask me whatever you like. It is your turn."

Mr. Richmond sat down.

But the silence was unbroken.

"I am here to answer questions, remember. Has no one anything to ask? Has no one found any difficulty to be met, and he does not know just how to meet it? Has no one found something to be done, and he does

not know just who is to do it? Speak, and tell everything. Now is the time."

Silence again, and then a little boy said,—

"I have found a feller that would like, I guess, to come to Sunday school; but his toes is out o' his shoes."

"Cannot he get another pair?" Mr. Richmond asked gravely.

"I guess not, sir."

"Then it is a case for the 'Aid and Comfort' committee," said Mr. Richmond. "Who is the head of your department? Who is chief of those who are looking up new scholars?"

"John Depeyster."

"Very well. Tell John Depeyster all about your little boy and his toes, and John will go to the head of the relief committee,— that is, Miss Forshew?— and she will see about it. Very well, Everett; you have made a good beginning. Who is next?"

"I would like to know," said Miss Forshew in a small voice, "where the relief com-

mittee are to get supplies from? If new shoes are to be bought, there must be funds."

"That is the very thing the relief committee undertook, I thought," said Mr. Richmond. "Must there be some scheme to relieve *them* first? Your business abilities can manage that, Miss Forshew, or I am mistaken in them. But, dear friends, we are not going to serve Christ with that which costs us nothing — are we?"

"Mr. Richmond," said Ailie Swan, "may temperance people drink cider?"

The laughter was universal now.

"Because," said Ailie unabashed, "I was talking to a boy about drinking it; and he said cider was nothing."

"I have seen *some* cider which was more than negative in its effects," said Mr. Richmond. "I think you were right, Ailie. Cider is only the juice of apples, to be sure; but it gets so unlike itself once in a while, that it is quite safe to have nothing to do with it."

"Mr. Richmond," said another girl, "what are you to do if people are rude?"

"The Bible says, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' Mary."

"But suppose they will not listen to you?"

"Be patient. People did not always listen to the Master, you remember."

"But would you try again?"

"If I had the least chance. We must not be afraid of 'taking the wind on our face,' as an old writer says. I would try again; and I would pray more for them. Did you try that, Mary?"

"No, sir."

"Don't ever hope to do anything without prayer. Indeed, we must look to God to do all. *We* are nothing. If anything is to be accomplished for the service of Christ by our hands, it must be by God's grace working through us and with us; no other way. The power is his, always. So whatever you do, pray; and hope in God; not in yourself."

"Mr. Richmond," said Frances Barth, "I

do not understand about 'carrying the message.' What does it mean?"

"You know what the message is? We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature."

"But how can we do it? — people who are not ministers."

"It is not necessary to get up into a pulpit to preach the gospel."

"No, sir; but — any way, how is one to 'carry the message'?"

"First, I would say, be sure that you have a message to carry."

"I thought you just said, Mr. Richmond, that the gospel is the message?" said Mrs. Trembleton.

"It is, the material of the message; but you know it must be very differently presented to different people."

"I know; but how can you tell?"

"As I said — be sure that you have a message to carry. Let your heart be full of some thought, or some truth, which you long to tell

to another person, or long that another person should know. Then ask the Lord to give you the right word for that person; and ask him to let his power go along with it."

"Then one's own heart must be full first," said another lady, Mrs. Barth, thoughtfully.

"It should be. And it may be."

"One has so little time to give to these things," said Mrs. Trembleton.

"Shall we serve the Lord with that which costs us nothing?" again said Mr. Richmond. But he did not prolong the conversation after that. He gave out a hymn and dismissed the assembly.

Matilda being quite in the front, was some distance behind her sisters in coming out. As she passed slowly down the aisle, she came near two of her little acquaintances in one of the seats, who were busily talking.

"It would be so nice!" she heard the one say to the other.

"Where shall we do it?"

"There's no place at our house."

"No more there isn't at mine. There are so many people about all over. Where can we go?"

"I'll tell you. Mr. Ulshoeffer has this place nice and warm long before Sunday school time, on Sundays; let us come here. We could come awhile before the time, you know; and it would be so nice. Nobody would interrupt us. O, there's Matilda Englefield — Matilda, won't you come too? O, I forgot; you are not one of the Band."

"Yes, I am," said Matilda.

"Why, you didn't rise the other night, when we all rose. I looked over at you to see."

"I gave Mr. Richmond my name afterwards."

"O, did you! O that's good. Now, Matilda, wouldn't you like to come with Mary and me?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Why, Mary said she would like to begin and read the Life of Jesus, you know, to see

how he did live; if we are to follow him, you know; and I said I would like it too; and we're going to do it together. And we're coming here Sundays, before time for Sunday school, to have a good quiet place where nobody can trouble us. Don't you want to come too, Matilda?"

"Yes. But other people will find it out and come too."

"We'll lock the door, — till it is time for the people to come to Sunday school, you know."

"But I don't believe *we* can get in, Ailie," said Mary Edwards. "I guess Mr. Ulshoeffer keeps the door locked himself."

"I know he does; but I know Regina Ulshoeffer, and she'll get leave for us and get the key. I know she will. Then we'll come, won't we? Good-night! Bring your Testament, Tilly!"

The little group scattered at the lecture room door, and Matilda ran after her party. They were far ahead; and when she caught

up with them they were deep in eager talk, which was almost altercation. Matilda fell behind and kept out of it and out of hearing of it, till they got home.

"Well!" said Mrs. Candy, as they entered the parlour, "what now? You do not look harmonious, considering. What have you had to-night?"

"An impossible sort of enthusiasm, mamma," said Clarissa, as she drew off her handsome furs.

"Impossible enthusiasm!" repeated Mrs. Candy.

"What has Mr. Richmond been talking about?" asked Mrs. Englefield.

"Why, mamma," said Letitia, "we are all to spend our lives in feeding sick people, and clothing lazy people, and running after the society of wicked people, as far as I can make out; and our money of course goes on the same plan. I advise you to look after Maria and Matilda, for they are just wise enough to think it's all right; and they will

be carrying it into practice before you know where you are."

"It is not so at all!" began Maria indignantly. "It is nothing like that, mamma. You know Mr. Richmond better.

"I think I know you better, too. Look where your study books were thrown down to-day when you came from school. Take them away, before you do anything else or say anything more."

Maria obeyed with a gloomy face.

"Do you approve of Mr. Richmond, aunt Marianne?" Clarissa asked. "If so, I will say no more; but I was astonished to-night. I thought he was a man of sense."

"He *is* a man of sense," said Mrs. Englefield; "but I always thought he carried his notions rather far."

"Why, aunt, he would make missionaries and colporteurs and sisters of charity of us all. Sisters of charity are a magnificent institution, of course; but what would become of the world if we were *all* sisters of charity?

And the idea! that everybody is to spend his whole time and all his means in looking up vagrants and nursing fever cases! I never heard anything like it in my life. That, and doing the work of travelling Methodists!"

"I wonder what the ministry is good for," said Mrs. Candy, "if everybody is to do the same work."

"I do not understand it," said Mrs. Englefield. "I was not brought up to these extreme theories myself; and I do not intend that my children shall be."

"But, mamma," said Maria re-entering, "Mr. Richmond does not go into extreme theories."

"Did you eat an apple after dinner?" said her mother.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You eat it up here, instead of in the dining room?"

"Why, mamma, you know we often" —

"Answer me. You eat it up here?"

"Yes."

"What did you do with the core and the peel?"

"Mamma, I — you know I had no knife"

"What did you do with it?"

No answer, except that Maria's cheeks grew bright.

"You know what you did with it, I suppose. Now bring it to me, Maria."

Colouring angrily as well as confusedly, Maria went to the mantelpiece where stood two little china vases, and took down one of them.

"Carry it to your aunt Candy," said her mother. "Look at it, Erminia. Now bring it here. Take this vase away, and empty it, and wash it, and put it in its place again; and never use it to put apple peels in, as long as you live."

Maria burst into tears and went away with the vase.

"Just a little careless," said her aunt.

"Heedless — always was," said her mother.

"Now Matilda is not so; and Anne and Letitia were neither of them so. It is a mystery to me, what makes one child so different from another child."

"Matilda is a little piece of thoughtfulness," said her aunt, drawing the child to her side and kissing her. "Don't you think a little too much, Tilly?"

Matilda wondered whether her aunt thought quite enough.

"Now, Maria," Mrs. Englefield went on as her other daughter came in, "are you purposing to enter into all Mr. Richmond's plans that Clarissa has been talking about?"

"Yes, ma'am, — of course," Maria said.

"Well, I want you to take notice, that I expect in the first place that all your home and school duties shall be perfectly performed. Religion, if it is good for anything, makes people do their duties. Your lessons must be perfect; your drawers kept in order; your clothes mended; you must be punctual

at school and orderly at home; do you hear? And if all this is not done, I shall take all your pretended religion for nothing but a sham; and shall pay no respect to it at all. Now go to bed; and act religion for a month before I hear you talk another word about it."

Maria went silently upstairs, accompanied by her little sister; but once in their room, she broke out.

"Mamma is real cross to-night! It is just Clarissa's doing."

"I'll tell you what it is, Maria," her sister said; "she is not cross; she is worried. I know she is worried."

"About Mr. Richmond?" said Maria.

"I don't know about what. No, I guess she was worried before we came back."

"She was cross anyhow!" said Maria. "How can one do everything *perfectly!*"

"But that is just what Mr. Richmond said," Matilda urged gently.

"What?"

"That we should be light-bearers, you

know. That is the way to be a light-bearer; to do everything perfectly."

"Well, you may, if you can," said Maria. "I can't."

CHAPTER VIII.

"TILLY, that money burns my pocket," Maria said the next morning.

"Then you had better put it somewhere else."

"I suppose you think that is smart," said Maria, "but it isn't; for that is just what I mean to do. I mean to spend it, somehow."

"What for?"

"That's just what I don't know. There are so many things I want; and I do not know what I want most. I have a good mind to buy a writing desk, for one thing."

"Why you have got one already."

"I mean a handsome one, — a real beauty, large, you know, and with everything in it. That lock of mine isn't good. Anybody could open it."

"But there is nobody to do that," said Matilda. "Nobody comes here but you and me."

"That don't make any difference!" said Maria impatiently. "Don't be so stupid. I would like to have a nice thing, anyhow. Then sometimes I think I would rather have a gold chain — like Clarissa's."

"You could not get that for twenty-five dollars," said Matilda.

"How do you know?"

"Hers cost three or four times as much as that."

"Did it? — Well, then I guess I will have the desk. Or a whole lot of handsome summer dresses. I guess I will have that."

"Maria," said her little sister facing round upon her, "how much are you going to give to the Missionary Fund?"

"The Missionary Fund?" said Maria.

"Yes. You promised to help that, you know."

"Not with my twenty-five dollars!" said

Maria energetically. "I think you are crazy, Matilda."

"Why?"

"Because! To ask me such a question as that. Aunt Candy's present!"

"Didn't you promise?"

"I did not promise to give my money—any more than I usually give. I put a penny in every Sunday."

"Then I don't see how you are going to help the Fund," said Matilda. "I don't see why you promised, either."

"I promised, because I wanted to join the Band; and I am going to do everything I ought to do. I think I am just as good as you, Matilda."

Matilda let the matter drop.

It did not appear what *she* was going to do with her money. She always said she had not decided. Only, one day soon after the last meeting recorded, Matilda was seen in one of the small bookstores of Shadywalk. There was not reading enough in the village

to support a bookstore proper; so the books crept into one corner of the apothecaries' shops, with supplies of stationery to form a connecting link between them and the toilet articles on the opposite counter. To one of these modest retreats of literature Matilda came this day and requested to look at Bibles. She chose one and paid for it; but she took a long time to make her choice, was excessively particular about the goodness of the binding and the clearness of the type; detecting an incipient loose leaf in one that was given her to examine; and finally going away perfectly satisfied. She said nothing about it at home; but of course Maria saw the new purchase immediately.

"So you have been to get a Bible!" she said. "Did you get it with part of your twenty five dollars?"

"Yes. I had no other money, Maria, to get it with."

"I think you are very foolish. What do you want a Bible for?"

"I had none."

"You could always read mine."

"Not always. And Maria, you know, if we are to follow Jesus, we want to know very well indeed how he went and what he did and what he wants us to do; and we cannot know all that without a *great deal* of study."

"I have studying enough to do already, for my part," said Maria.

"But you must study this?"

"I haven't a minute of time, Matilda;—not a minute."

'Then how will you know what to do?"

"Just as well as you will, perhaps. I've got my map of South America to do all over, from the beginning."

"And all the rest of the class?"

"Yes."

"Then you are no worse off than the others. And Ailie Swan reads her Bible, I know."

"I think I am just as good as Ailie Swan," said Maria with a toss of her head.

"But, Maria,"—said Maria's little sister,

leaning her elbows on the table and looking earnestly up at her.

"Well, what?"

"Is that the right way to talk?"

"Why not?"

"I don't see what Ailie has to do with your being good."

"Nor I, I am sure," said Maria. "It was you brought her up."

"Because, if she has time, I thought you might have time."

"Well, I haven't time," said Maria. "It is as much as I can do, to study my lesson for Sunday school."

"Then, Maria, how *can* you know how to be good?"

"It is no part of goodness to go preaching to other people, I would have you know," said Maria.

Matilda turned over the leaves of her new Bible lovingly, and said no more. But her sister failing her, she was all the more driven to seek the little meetings in the corner of the

Sunday school room; and they grew to be more and more pleasant. At home nothing seemed to be right. Mrs. Englefield was not like herself. Anne and Letitia were gloomy and silent. The air was heavy. Even Clarissa's beautiful eyes, when they were slowly lifted up to look at somebody, according to her custom, seemed cold and distant as they were not at first. Clarissa visited several sick people and carried them nourishing things; but she looked calm disapproval when Maria proclaimed that Tilly had been all up Lilac lane to look for a stray Sunday school scholar. Mrs. Englefield laughed and did not interfere.

"I would never let a child of mine go there alone," said Mrs. Candy.

"There is no danger in Shadywalk," said Mrs. Englefield.

"You will be sorry for it, sister."

"Well — I am sorry for most things, sooner or later," said Mrs. Englefield.

So weeks went by; until it came to be the end of winter, and something of spring was

already stealing into the sunlight and softening the air; that wonderful nameless "something," which is nothing but a far-off kiss from Spring's fingers. One Sunday Mrs. Englefield had gone to bed with a headache; and hastening away from the dinner table, Matilda went off to her appointment. Mr. Ulshoeffer had been propitious; he let the little girls have the key on the inside of the schoolroom door; and an hour before it was time for the classes of the school to be gathering, the three friends met at the gate and went in. They always sat in a far-off corner of one of the transepts, to be as cozy as possible. They were all punctual to-day, Ailie having the key of the door.

"Girls, don't you get confused sometimes, with the things you hear people say?" she asked as she unlocked the door. "I do; and then sometimes I get real worried."

"So do I get worried!" Mary Edwards assented. "And I don't know what to say—that's the worst of it."

"Now only to-day," Ailie went on, as they walked up the matted aisle with a delicious sense of being free and alone and confidential, "I heard some one say it was no use for children to be Christians; he said they didn't know their own minds, and don't know what they want, and by and by it will all be smoke. And when I hear such things, it affects me differently. Sometimes I get mad; and then sometimes it takes the strength all out of me."

"But if we have the right sort of strength," said Matilda, "people can't take it from us, Ailie."

"Well, mine seems to go," said Ailie. "And then I feel bad."

"*We* know what we want," said Mary,— "if we are children."

"We know our own minds," said Matilda. "We *know* we do. It is no matter what people say."

"I wish they wouldn't say it," said Ailie. "Or I wish I needn't hear it. But it is good

tc come here and read, isn't it? And I think our talk helps us — don't you?"

"It helps me," said Mary Edwards. "I've got nobody at home to talk to."

"Let us begin, girls, or we shall not have time," said Matilda. "It's the fourteenth chapter."

"Of Luke?" said Ailie. "Here it is. But I don't like Luke so well as Matthew; do you? Well, begin."

They began and read on, verse by verse, until fourteen verses were read. There they paused.

"What does this mean?" said Matilda, knitting her small brows.

"Isn't it right to ask our friends to tea or anything? Why, Jesus went to dine with this Pharisee," said Mary looking up.

"Yes, but that is another thing," said Matilda. "You see, we must ask the people who have no friends."

"But why not our friends too?"

"Perhaps it would cost too much to ask

everybody," said Ailie. "One would be giving parties all the time; and they cost, I can tell you."

"But some people are rich enough," said Mary.

"Those people don't make parties for the poor, though," said Ailie. "Catch them!"

"But then, *can* it mean that it is wrong to have our friends come and see us?" said Matilda.

"It cannot be wrong. Don't you remember, Martha and Mary used to have Jesus come to their house? and they used to make suppers for him."

"But *he* was poor" — said Matilda.

"That is different, too, from having a party, and making a great fuss," said Ailie.

"And *that* is done just to pay one's debts," said Matilda, "for I have heard mother say so. People ask her, and so she must ask people. And that is what it means, girls, I guess. See, — 'lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.' That

isn't making a feast for people that you love."

"Then it is wicked to ask people just that they may ask you," said Mary Edwards.

"Instead of that, we must ask people who *cannot* ask us," said Matilda.

"But how queer we should be!" said Ailie Swan. "Just think; we should not be like anybody else. And what should we do if people asked us?"

"I don't care," said Matilda. "See, girls; —'thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'"

"And is that what it means in the next verse?" said Mary Edwards. "But I don't understand that. 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' Do they eat bread there? I thought they didn't."

"It is like what we read a little way back," said Matilda, flirting over one or two leaves, —"yes, here in the 12th chapter,—'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto

you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.' "

"That means Jesus," said Mary Edwards. "He will make them to sit down to meat! — and will serve them. What does it mean, I wonder?"

"It means, that Jesus will give them good things," said Ailie.

"I guess they will be blessed, then, — that eat when He feeds them," said the other little girl. "I would like to be there."

"There is a verse or two that my Bible turns to," said Matilda. "In the Revelation. 'And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' O, don't you like to read in the Revelation? But we are all called; aren't we?"

"And here, in our chapter," said Mary, "it goes on to tell of the people who were called and wouldn't come. So I suppose everybody is called; and some won't come."

"Some don't get the invitation," said Matilda looking up.

"A good many don't, I guess," said Ailie. "Who do you think gets it in Lilac lane?"

"Nobody, hardly, I guess," said Mary Edwards; "there don't many people come to church out of Lilac lane."

"But then, girls," said Matilda, "don't you think we ought to take it there? the invitation, I mean?"

"How can we? Why, there are lots of people in Lilac lane that I would be afraid to speak to."

"I wouldn't be afraid," said Matilda. "They wouldn't do us any harm."

"But what would you say to them, Tilly?"

"I would just ask them to come, Ailie. I would take the message to them. Just think, Ailie, of that time, of that supper — when Jesus will give good things with his own hand; — and how many people would come if they knew. I would tell everybody. Don't you think we ought to?"

"I don't like to speak to people, much," said Ailie. "They would think I was setting myself up."

"It is only carrying the message," said Matilda. "And that is what Jesus was doing *all the time*, you know; and he has told us to follow him."

"Then must we be telling it all the time too?" asked Ailie. "We should do nothing else."

"O yes, we should. That would not hinder," said Matilda. "It doesn't take so very long to say a word. Here is another verse, girls; this is in the Revelation too; listen. This must be what those other verses mean: 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"

As if a thrill from some chord of an angel's

harp had reached them, the children were still for a moment.

"I don't believe the people are happy in Lilac lane," said Matilda.

"Maybe they are," said Ailie. "But I guess they can't be. People that are not good, can't be happy."

"And Jesus has given us the message to take to everybody," said Matilda; "and when we come up there, to that supper, and he asks us if we took the message to the people in the Lane, what shall we say? I know what I would like to say."

"But there are other people, besides in the Lane," said Ailie.

"We must take it to them too," said Mary Edwards.

"We *can't* take it to everybody."

"No; only to *everybody that we can*," said Matilda. "Just think how glad some of those people will be, when they hear it. What should we do if Mr. Richmond had never told it to us?"

Ailie bit her lip. Whether by design or not, Mary Edwards turned to her Testament and read the next words that followed in course.

"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

And seeing Mr. Ulshoeffer coming to open the door, the little conclave broke up. The children and teachers came pouring in for the Sunday school.

Going out after it was over, Matilda noticed a face she had not seen; a boy older than herself, but not very old, standing near the door, looking at the small crowd that trooped along the aisle. The thought came to Matilda that he was a new scholar, and if so somebody ought to welcome him; but nobody did, that she could see. He stood alone, looking at the people as if they were strange

to him; with a good, bright, wide-awake face, handsome and bold. Matilda did not want to take the welcoming upon herself, but she thought somebody should do it; and the next minute she had paused in front of the stranger.

"Is this the first time you have been here?" she asked, with a kind of shy grace. The boy's bright eyes came down to her with a look of surprise, as he assented.

"I am very glad to see you in our Sunday school," she went on. "I hope it was pleasant."

"It was pleasant enough," said the stranger. "There is a jolly fellow over there asked me to come — Ben Barth; are you his sister?"

"O no," said Matilda. "Ben has his own sisters. I am not one of them."

"I thought maybe he told you to speak to me."

"Nobody told me," said Matilda. By this time they had followed the crowd out at the

door and were taking their way down the street.

"What did you speak to me then, for?" said the boy with a roguish look at her.

"I thought you were a stranger."

"And what if I was?"

"I think, if you are a stranger anywhere, it is pleasant to have somebody speak to you."

"You're a Brick!" was the stranger's conclusion.

"Am I?" said Matilda. "Why am I?"

"You're a girl, I suppose, and don't understand things," said her companion. "Boys know what a Brick is — when they see it."

"Why, so do I," said Matilda, "don't I?"

But the boy only laughed, and then asked Matilda where she lived, and if she had any brothers, and where she went to school.

"I go to the other school, you see," said he; "that's how I've never seen you before. I wish you went to my school; and I'd give you a ride on my sled."

"But you'll come to our Sunday school, won't you?" Matilda asked.

"To be sure I will; but you see, I can't take you on my sled on Sunday. They'd have all the ministers out after me."

"O, no!" said Matilda. "I was not thinking of the sled; but you are very kind."

"I should like it," said the boy. "Yes, I am coming to the school — though I guess I've got an old fogy of a teacher. But the minister's a Brick — isn't he?"

"He isn't much like *me*," said Matilda laughing. "And the sort of bricks that I know, one is very much like another."

The boy laughed too, and asked if she didn't want to know his name? Matilda glanced again at the frank face and nice dress, and said yes.

"My name's Norton Laval. What's yours?"

"Matilda Englefield. I am going this way."

"Yes, you go that way and I go this way,

but we shall see each other again. Good bye."

So at the corner they parted; and Matilda went home, thinking that in this instance at least the welcoming of strangers had paid well. For this was a pleasant new acquaintance, she was sure. She mounted the stairs with happy feet to her room; and there found Maria in a flood of tears. Maria had staid at home from Sunday school to-day.

"What is the matter, Maria?" her little sister inquired. "How's mamma?"

"I don't know! O, nothing will ever be well again! O Tilly, what will become of us!"

And here a storm of sobs and tears came on, in the midst of which Matilda's questions could get no attention. Matilda knew her sister, however, and waited.

"O Tilly — it's so dreadful!"

"What?" said Matilda calmly.

"We haven't got anything to live upon. Anne and Letty have been telling me. We

haven't. We are going to be as poor as — as poor as anybody. We have got nothing to buy anything with — nothing at all! Anne says so."

"Did mamma say so?"

"Mother's sick. No, aunt Candy told the girls. It's true. Somebody or something that had mamma's money — to take care of — has gone off, or been ruined, or something; and we are ruined! There is nothing left at all for us to live upon. And that is what has been troubling mamma all these weeks; and now it is certain and she knows all about it; and I guess it is that has made her sick. O, what shall we do?"

The turn of Matilda's head was inimitable and indescribable. It was not arrogance or affectation; it was perfectly natural to the child; but to a bystander it would have signified that she was aware Maria's views and statements were not to be relied upon and could not be made the basis of either opinion or action. She took off her things, and with-

out another word made her way to the room of her elder sisters. They were both sitting there gloomily.

"How is mamma?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen her since dinner."

It was with a little of the same half graceful, half competent gesture of the head that Matilda applied herself to Letitia.

"What is all this story, Letty, that Maria has been telling me?"

"How should I know? Maria tells a great many stories."

"I mean, about what has been troubling mamma."

"Maria had no business to tell you, and so trouble you with it."

"But is it true, Letty? Anne, is it true?"

"I suppose it is true — if you mean what she heard from me a little while ago. That is true."

"And mamma has lost all her money?"

"Every cent."

"When did you know it, Anne and Letty?"

"We have known it a day or two. It is true. It is all true, Tilly."

"What is mamma going to do, then?"

"Get well, I hope. That is the first thing. Aunt Candy says she will pay for her board and Clarissa's, and mamma and you can live on that. Letty and I must go get our living — somehow."

And here Anne broke down. Matilda wanted to ask about Maria's fate in the general falling to pieces of the family; but her throat felt so full, she was afraid she could not. So she did not try; she turned and went downstairs to her mother.

Mrs. Englefield was dozing, flushed and uneasy; she hardly noticed who was with her, but asked for water, and then for cologne water. Matilda brought the one and the other, and sat by the bedside wiping her mother's brow and cheeks with the cologne. Nobody came to interrupt or relieve her for

some time. The light of the afternoon began to fade and the sunbeams came aslant from the western sky; and still the child sat there passing the handkerchief gently over her mother's face. And while she sat so, Matilda was thinking what possible ways there might be by which *she* could make money.

"Tilly, is that you?" said Mrs. Englefield faintly as the sunbeams were just quitting the room.

"Yes, mamma. Are you better?"

"Is there no one else here?"

"No, mamma. Aunt Candy is out; and I suppose the girls thought you were sleeping. Are you better, mamma? You have had a nice long nap."

"It's been horrid!" said Mrs. Englefield. "I have dreamed of every possible dreadful thing."

"But you feel better now?"

"My head aches — no — O my head! Tilly" —

"What, mamma?"

"I am going to be sick. I sha'n't be about again for a while, I know. I want you to do just what I tell you."

"Yes, mamma. What?"

"Anne and Letty are going away."

"Yes, mamma. I know."

"Do you know why, dear?"

The tone of tender, sorrowful sympathy in which this was said, overcame the child. As her mother's eyes with the question languidly sought her face, Matilda burst into tears and threw herself upon her neck.

"No, don't," said Mrs. Englefield faintly, — "I can't bear it. Don't, Matilda! Rise up and listen to me."

Matilda did as she was told. She forced back her tears; stopped her sobs; dashed away the drops from the corners of her eyes; and sat up again to hear what her mother had to say to her.

"Give me some more water first. — Anne and Letty are going away, Tilly; and I cannot be up and see to anything; and I can't

hire a woman to do what's to be done. You tell Maria, from me, she must stay home from school and take care of the house. You will do what you can, Tilly — oh, my head! — you can put rooms in order and such things; and Maria must go down into the kitchen and get the breakfast — "

"Must Maria get the dinner too, mamma?"

"Yes, the dinner — "

"But *can* she, mamma?"

"She *must;* or else your aunt Candy will hire somebody to do it; and that will come out of what she pays me, and we shall not have enough left. She *must*, Tilly."

"But aunt Candy wouldn't mind, just while you are sick, mamma, would she?"

"Yes! I know. Just you do as I tell you; promise me that you will."

"I will, mamma."

"Promise me that Maria will."

"I guess she will, mamma. I'll try and make her. Shall I bring her here, and you tell her yourself?"

"No, indeed. Don't bring Maria here. She would make such a row she would kill me. Anne and Letty will see to things, till they go — O, I can't talk any longer. Give me some more water."

She was presently dozing again; and Matilda, clasping her small hands, sat and thought over what was before her. It began to feel like a weight on her somewhere — on her shoulders, she thought, and lying on her heart too; and the longer she thought about it, the heavier and harder it pressed. The family to be broken up; her mother to be straitened for money; Matilda did not know very well what that meant, but it sounded disagreeable; her aunt suddenly presented in new and not pleasant colours; a general threatening cloud overshadowing all the future. Matilda began to get, what her strong little heart was not accustomed to, a feeling of real discouragement. What could she do? And then a word of the afternoon's lesson in the Sunday school came freshly to mind. It had

been quite new to Matilda, and had seemed to her very beautiful; but it took on quite another sort of beauty now, — "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; he shall sustain thee."

"Will he?" thought Matilda. "Can he? May I tell him about all this? and will he help me to bear it, and help me to do all that work, and to make Maria do hers? But he will, *for he has said so.*"

It was getting dusk in the room. Matilda knelt down by her chair, and poured out all her troubles into the ear that would heed and could help her.

"Who's here?" said the voice of Mrs. Candy coming in. "Who is that? Matilda? How did you come here, Tilly?"

"I have been taking care of my mother."

"Have you? How is she? Well, you run downstairs — I'll take care of her now. It is better for you not to be here. Don't come in again, unless I give you leave. Now you may go."

"I wonder, must I mind her?" said Ma-

tilda to herself. "I do not see why. She is not mother; and if mother is sick, that does not give everybody else a right to say what I shall do. I think it is very queer of aunt Candy to take that way with me."

And I am afraid Matilda's head was carried a little with the air which was, to be sure, natural to her, and not unpretty, and yet which spoke of a good deal of conscious competency. It is no more than justice to Matilda to say that she did not ever put the feeling into any ill-mannerly form. It hardly appeared at all, except in this turn of her head, which all her own family knew, laughed at, admired, and even loved. So she went down stairs to the parlour.

"How is aunt Marianne?" was the question from Clarissa. "Letty told me where you were. But little one, it is not good for you to go into your mother's sick room; you can do nothing, and you are better out. So mamma wishes you not to go in there

till aunt Marianne is better — you understand?"

"Clarissa too!" thought Matilda to herself. But she made no answer. She came by the fire to warm herself; for her mother's room had been cold.

"You shouldn't go so near the fire; you'll burn your dress," Clarissa remarked.

"No," said Matilda; and she said but that one word.

"You will take the colour out, if you do not set it on fire; and that is what I meant. That is your best dress, Tilly."

It was true; and sorely against her will Matilda stepped a little back.

"You were a great while at Sunday school to-day," Clarissa went on.

"No," said Matilda; "not longer than usual."

"What do you learn there?"

"Why, cousin Issa, what do you teach at *your* Sunday school?" said Matilda. For Clarissa had sheered off from Mr. Richmond's

church, and gone into a neighbouring one which belonged to the denomination in which she had been brought up.

"That is not good manners, to answer one question with another, little one."

"I thought one answer might serve for both," said Matilda.

"I am afraid it would not. For in my Sunday school I teach the catechism."

"Don't the catechism tell about Jesus?"

"Some things, — of course."

"Our lessons tell all things about him," said Matilda; "and that is what I learn."

"Do you learn about yourself?"

"What about myself?"

"How you ought to behave, and how you ought not to behave."

"Why, I think learning about Jesus teaches one *that*," said Matilda.

"I think there is nothing so good as coming home to learn about home," said Clarissa.

The talk did not run in a way to please Matilda, and she was silent. Presently they

were called down to tea. Everybody suffering from a fit of taciturnity.

"Maria, sit up straight," said Mrs. Candy.

"I always sit so," was the answer.

"*So*, is not very graceful. Matilda does not sit so."

"Matilda was always straight — it's her way," said Maria.

"Well make it your way too. Come! Straighten up. What shoulders! One would think you were a boy playing at leap-frog."

"I don't know what 'leap-frog' is," said Maria colouring; "and I don't think anybody would think I was anything but a girl anyhow. I get tired sitting up straight."

"When?" asked Clarissa.

Matilda's head was quite indescribable in the turn it gave at this moment. Her supper was done; she was leaving the table.

"You are not going into your mother's room?" said her aunt, catching her hand as she passed.

"You said you wished I would not."

"Yes, my dear. I am going up there immediately. Don't go out either, Matilda."

"I am going to church, aunt Candy."

"I think not. Not to-night. I do not approve of so much church going for little girls. You can study your lesson, you know, for next Sunday. I do not want to have anybody else sick on my hands till your mother is well."

Matilda's face expressed none of her disappointment; her head was even carried a little higher than usual as she left the room. But outside the door her steps flagged; and she went slowly up the stairs, asking herself if she was bound to mind what her aunt said. She was not clear about it. In the abstract, Matilda was well enough disposed to obey all lawful authority; just now a spirit of opposition had risen. Was this lawful authority? Mrs. Englefield was sick, to be sure; but did that give Mrs. Candy any right to interfere with what was known to be Mrs. Englefield's will when she was not sick? Matilda thought

not. Then, on the other hand, she did not wish to do anything to displease her aunt, who had always been kind to her; she did not wish to change the relations between them. Slowly Matilda mounted stair after stair till she got to her room. There she stood by the window a moment, thinking and sorrowing; for if she did not wish to anger her aunt, neither did she wish to lose her evening in church, her sight of Mr. Richmond, and his sermon. And just then, the clear sweet sound of the church bell came, with its first note, to tell that the service would begin in a quarter of an hour. It sounded like a friend's voice calling her. Her aunt Candy's church bell joined in, and Mr. Everett's church, and Mr. Schönflocker's church; but that one which Mr. Ulshoeffer rang was the loudest of all to Matilda's ear. She could hardly stand it. Then Maria burst in.

"What are you going to do?" said Matilda.

"Do? Why, I am going to church, of course; and in a hurry."

"And Anne and Letty?"

"Certainly; and Issa too."

Matilda said no more, but hastily made herself ready, and went down with the rest.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNE and Letitia were to leave home in the afternoon of Monday; and Maria and Matilda went to school that morning as usual. But when the noon hour came, Matilda called her sister into a corner of the emptied schoolroom, and sat down with a face of business.

"What is the matter?" said Maria. "We must go home to dinner."

"I should like to speak to you here first."

"About what? Say it and be quick; for I am ever so hungry. Aunt Candy cut my breakfast short this morning."

"I wanted to say to you, that we had better take home our books."

"What for?" said Maria with opening eyes.

"Because, Maria, mamma was talking to me last night about it. You know there will be no one at home now, after to-day, but you and me."

"Aunt Erminia and Clarissa?"

"Nobody to do anything, I mean."

"Can't they do anything? I don't know what you are talking of, Matilda; but I know I want my dinner."

"Who do you think will get dinner to-morrow?"

"Well — mother's sick of course; and Anne and Letty are going. I should think aunt Candy might."

"No, she won't."

"How do you know?"

"Because mother said so. She won't do anything."

"Then she'll have to get a girl to do things, I suppose."

"But Maria, that is just what mother wants she shouldn't do; because she'd have to pay for it."

"Who would have to pay for it?"

"Mamma."

"Why would she?"

"She said so."

"I don't see why she would, I am sure. If aunt Erminia hires a girl, *she'll* pay for her."

"But that will come out of what aunt Erminia pays to mamma; and what aunt Erminia pays to mamma is what we have got to live upon."

"Who said so?"

"Mamma said so." Matilda answered with her lip trembling; for the bringing facts all down to hard detail, was difficult to bear.

"Well I *do* think," exclaimed Maria, "if I had a sister sick and not able to help herself, I would not be so mean!"

Matilda sat still and cried and said nothing.

"Who *is* going to do all the work then, Tilly?"

There would have been something comical,

if it had not been sad, in the way the little girl looked up and said, "You and I."

"I guess we will!" said Maria with opening eyes. "You and I! Take care of the house, and wash the dishes, and cook the dinner, and everything! You know we couldn't, Matilda; and what's more, *I* know we won't."

"Yes, mamma wishes it. We must; and so we can, Maria."

"*I* can't," said Maria, taking down her school cloak.

"But Maria! we must. Mamma will be more sick if we do not; you heard what aunt Candy said at breakfast, that she is fearfully nervous; and if she hears that there is a hired girl in the house, it will worry her dreadfully."

"It will be aunt Candy's fault then," said Maria, fastening her cloak. "I never heard of anybody so mean in all my life! — never."

"But that don't help anything, Maria. And you and I *must* do what mamma said.

You know we shall have little enough to live on, as it is, and if you take the pay of a hired girl out of it, there will be so little left."

"I've got my twenty-five dollars, that I can get summer dresses with; I am glad I haven't spent it," said Maria. "Come, Tilly; I'm going home."

"But Maria, you have not said what you ought to say yet."

"What ought I to say?"

"I will help and do my part. We can manage it. Come, Maria, say that you will."

"Your part," said Maria. "What do you suppose your part would come to? What can such a child as you do?"

"Maria, now is the time to shew whether you are really one of the Band of workers."

"I am, of course. I joined it."

"That would not make you one of them, if you don't do what they promised to do."

"When did I ever promise to be aunt

Candy's servant girl?" said Maria fiercely "I should like to know."

"But 'we are the servants of Christ,'" said Matilda softly, her eyes glistening through tears.

"What then?"

"We promised to try to do whatever would honour him."

"I don't know what all this affair has to do with it," said Maria. "You say *we* promised;—you didn't?"

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't join the Band?"

"Yes, I did."

"When?"

"A few days after you did."

"Why didn't you tell me? Did you tell Mr. Richmond?"

"Yes."

"I think it is mean, that you did not tell me."

"I am telling you now. But now, Maria, you know what you promised."

"I did not promise this sort of thing at all, Tilly."

"Yes, don't you know? — 'we stand ready to do his will.' That's in the covenant."

"But *this* is not his will," insisted Maria. "This is aunt Erminia's meanness."

"But it certainly is his will that we should do what mamma says, and please her; and this is the work he has given us to do."

Maria's answer this time was to sit down and cry for her part. Matilda did not join her, but stood by, patiently waiting. Maria cried and sobbed for several minutes; then she started up and set off homewards at a furious rate. Matilda gathered together her books and followed her sister; trying to comfort herself with the thought that this *was* certainly the work given them to do, and that she would try and make the best of it.

The dinner was sorrowful enough. Maria indeed eat it as if remembering it was the last dinner for some time to come that she would find ready prepared for her. But

Anne and Letty were broken down with grief; and Mrs. Candy's endeavours to comfort them were either not the right sort, or fell upon unready ears. Clarissa was composed as usual.

"You were late from school, Maria and Matilda," their aunt remarked; finding Anne and Letty unmanageable. "What was the reason?"

"Tilly was talking to me," Maria said.

"You could talk on the way home, I should think. I dislike to have dinner eaten by stages; first one set coming, and then another. I am going to ask you to be punctual for the future. Do not be in a hurry, Maria; there is time enough, now you are here, to eat moderately."

"I am hungry. I don't want to eat moderately, aunt Erminia."

"As much as you wish; but you can be moderate in manner, cannot you, even if not in quantity?"

"Nobody ever told me I eat too much, before," said Maria.

"There are a great many things that you have never been told, I suppose?" said Clarissa, lifting her handsome eyes quietly.

"I don't care about your telling me either," said Maria.

"My dear, that is not polite," interposed her aunt. "I am sorry to hear you speak so. Would you not like to have Issa, or any one, tell you things that you would be the better for? You would not wish to remain just as you are, to the end of your days?"

"It don't hurt anybody but me," said Maria.

"I beg your pardon. Everything that is not graceful and well-mannered, on the part of people in whose company we are, hurts me and Clarissa. It hurts me to have you bolt down your food as you were doing just now — if I am sitting at the same table with you And it hurts me to have you speak rudely. I hope you will mend in all these things."

"It will not hurt you to have us say good-bye," said Anne rising. "I will do that now, if you please. Letty, I will leave you to take care of these things, and I will finish the packing. We must be quick, too."

The farewell greetings with her aunt and cousin were soon spoken; and Maria and Matilda tore upstairs after their sister, to pour out tears and complaints together during the remaining moments of her being at home. Matilda's tears however were quiet and her words very few.

"Ain't she too bad!" exclaimed Maria.

"You must try and hold your own the best you can," said Anne; "until mamma gets up again. Poor children! I am afraid she will be too much for you."

"But, Anne, did you think aunt Candy was like that?" said Maria. "She wasn't like that at first."

"I guess she was. All she wanted was a chance. Now she's got it. Try and bear it

the best you can, till mamma is well. She cannot be worried now."

"Is mamma very sick, Anne?" Matilda ventured.

"N–o," said Anne, "but she might be, Tiliy, if she was worried. The doctor says she is very nervous, and must be kept quiet. She has been worrying so long, you see. So you must try and not do anything to fret her."

The prospect was sad. When the omnibus came to take Anne and Letty to the station, and when the last kisses and hugs were over, and the omnibus bounced away, carrying with it all they had at the moment, the two girls left at home felt forlorn enough. The only thing to be done was to rush upstairs to their room and cry their hearts out. And that was done thoroughly.

But by and by, Matilda's thoughts, in their very extreme need of comfort, began to take up the words again which she had once found so good: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord;

he shall sustain thee." She left her sobbing, dried her eyes, sat down by the window, and found the place in her Bible, that her eyes might have the comfort of seeing and reading the words there. The Lord's words: Tilly knew they were true. But Maria sobbed on. At last her little sister called her.

"What is it?" said she.

"Come here, — and I will shew you something good."

"Good? — what?" said Maria, approaching the window. "O, words in the Bible!"

"Read, Maria."

"I have read them before," said the other sullenly, after she had glanced at the place.

"But they are true, Maria."

"Well — they don't help me."

"But they help *me*," said Matilda. "It's Jesus' promise to help."

"I don't believe it is for such things as this."

"Why not?" said Matilda, a sudden chill coming over her heart. "It says just, 'Cast

thy burden'—it might be any burden; it does not signify what it is, Maria."

"Yes, it does; it is not for such little things," said Maria. "It is for great religious people and their affairs. Oh dear! oh dear!"

Sorely troubled now at having her supports knocked away from under her, Matilda eagerly sought further, if perchance she might find something that Maria could not question. Her Bible had a few references in the margin; consulting these, she presently found what she had need of; but a feeling of want of sympathy between them forbade her to shew the new words to her sister. Matilda pored over them with great rest of heart; gave thanks for them; and might have used with truth David's language—"Thy words were found, and I did eat them." The words were these:

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God

And the peace of God that passeth understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Matilda's eyes were dry and her voice was clear, when she reminded her sister that it was time to get tea. Maria was accustomed to do this frequently, and made no objection now. So the two went down together. Passing the parlour door, however, it opened, and Mrs. Candy called Matilda in.

"I want to speak a word to you, Tilly," she said. "Did you go out last evening?"

"Yes; I did, aunt Erminia."

"You went to church?"

Matilda assented; but though she had bowed her head, it seemed to be more erect than before.

"And I had told you not to go, had I not? You understood that?"

A silent assent was again all that the child gave.

"I am accustomed to be obeyed," said Mrs. Candy. "That is my way. It may not be

your mother's way; but all the same, I am mistress here while she is sick; mistress over you as well as the rest. You must obey me like all the rest. Will you?"

What was meant by "all the rest" Matilda marvelled, seeing that nobody else but Maria and her own daughter were left in the house. This time she gave no sign of answering; she only stood and listened.

"Will you obey me, Tilly?"

Matilda was not sure whether she would. In her mind it depended on circumstances. She would obey, conditionally. But she would not compromise her dignity by words about it. She was silent.

"I must be obeyed," Mrs. Candy went on, with mild tones, although a displeased face. "If not willingly, then unwillingly. I shall punish you, Matilda, if you disobey me; and so severely that you will find it best not to do it again. But I should be very sorry to have you drive me to such disagreeable doings. We should both be sorry together. It is

much best not to let things come to such extremity."

Matilda coloured high, but except that and the slight gesture of her head, she yet gave no reply.

"That is enough upon that subject," the lady went on. "Only, I should be glad to have you tell me that you will try to please me."

"I wish to please everybody — as far as I can," Matilda said at last.

"Then you will please me?"

"I hope so."

"She hopes so, Issa," said Mrs. Candy, turning her head round towards where her daughter sat.

"American children, mamma," was Clarissa's comment.

"There is another thing, Matilda," Mrs. Candy resumed after a slight pause. "Your mother has told me that Maria is competent to do the work of the house until she gets well. Is she? and will Maria, d

you think, try to please me as much as you do?"

"Yes, ma'am. I think she can — she and I. We will do it," Matilda answered more readily.

"She and you! What can you do?"

"I can help a little."

"Well then, that is settled; and I need not look out for a girl?"

"O, no, aunt Candy. She and I can do it."

"But mind, I must have things in order, and well done. It is my sister's choice, that Maria should do it. But it is not mine, unless I can have everything in good order. You may tell Maria so, and let her understand what it is she is undertaking. I am to have no dusty stairs, and no half set tables. If she wants instruction in anything, I am willing to give it; but I cannot have disorder. Now you may go and tell her; and tell her to have tea ready in half an hour."

"What did she want of you?" Maria

asked, when Matilda rejoined her down-stairs.

"She wanted to talk to me about my going out last evening."

"Oh! Was she in a great fuss about it?"

"And Maria, she wants tea to be ready in half an hour."

"I'll have it ready sooner than that," said Maria bustling about.

"But you must not. She wants it in half an hour; you must not have it ready before."

"Why not?" said Maria stopping short.

"Why, she wants it *then*. She has a right to have tea when she likes."

But Matilda sighed as she spoke, for her aunt's likings were becoming a heavy burden to her, in the present and in the future. The two girls went gently round, setting the table, cutting the bread, putting out the sweetmeat, getting the tea-pot ready for the tea; then they stood together over the stove, waiting for the time to make it.

"There's one comfort," Matilda said with another sigh; — "we can do it all for Christ."

"What?" said Maria starting.

"It is work he has given us to do, you know, Maria; and we have promised to do everything we can to please him. So we can do this to please him."

"I don't see how," said Maria. "*This* isn't Band work; — do you think it is?"

"It isn't Sunday school work. But, Maria, you know, — 'we are the servants of Christ.' Now he has given us this work to do."

"That's just talking nonsense," said Maria. "There is no religion in pots and kettles."

Matilda had to think her way out of that statement.

"Maria, in the covenant, you know, we say 'we stand ready to do his will;' and you *know* it is his will that we should have these things to do."

"I don't!" said Maria. "That's a fact."

"Then how comes it that we have them?"

"Just because mamma is sick, and aunt Erminia is too mean to live!"

"You should not speak so," said Matilda. 'How comes mamma to be sick? and how comes it that we have got no money to hire a girl?"

"Because that man in New York was wicked, and ran away with mamma's money."

"Maria," said Matilda solemnly, "I don't see what you meant by joining the Band."

"I meant more than you did!" said Maria flaming out. "Such children as you are too young to join it."

"We are not too young to be Christians."

"You are too young to join the church and be baptized."

"Why?" said Matilda.

"O, you are too young to *understand.* Anybody that knows will tell you so. And if you are not fit to be baptized and join the church, you are not fit to join the Band. Now I can make the tea."

Matilda looked hard at the tea-pot, as it stood on the stove while the tea was brewing; but she let her sister alone after that. When the meal was over and the dishes washed and everything done, she and Maria went up to their own room and Maria at once went to bed. Her little sister opened her Bible and read, over and over, the words that had comforted her. They were words from God; promises and commands straight from heaven. Matilda took them so, and studied earnestly how she might do what they bade her. "Cast her burden on the Lord," — how was she to do that? Clearly, she was not to keep it on her own heart, she thought; she must trust that the Lord would take care of anything put into his hands. The words were very good. And the other words "Be careful for nothing" — that was the same thing differently expressed; and Matilda felt very glad it had been written for her in both places and in both ways; and that she was ordered "in everything" to "make her requests known

to God." She might not have dared, perhaps, in some little troubles that only concerned a child and were not important to anybody else; but now there could be no doubt; she might, and she must. She was very glad. But, "with thanksgiving?" — how could that be always? Now, for instance? Things were more disagreeable and sorrowful than in all her life she had ever known them; "give thanks"? must she? *now?* And how could she? Matilda studied over it a good while. Finally took to praying over it. Asked to be taught how she could give thanks when she was sorry. And getting quite tired, at last went to bed, where Maria was already fast asleep.

There is no denying that Matilda was sorry to wake up the next morning. But awake she found herself, and broad awake too, and the light outside the window admonished her she had no time then to lie and think. She roused Maria immediately, and herself began dressing without a moment's delay.

"O, what's the hurry!" said Maria yawning and stretching herself. "I'm sleepy."

"But it isn't early, Maria."

"Well — I don't want it to be early."

"Yes, you do, Maria; you forget. We have a great deal on our hands. Make haste, please, and get up. Do, Maria!"

"What have we got to do so much?" said Maria, with yawn the second.

"Everything. You are so sleepy, you have forgotten."

"Yes. I have forgotten," said Maria closing her eyes.

"O Maria, please do get up! I'm almost dressed; and I can't do the whole, you know. Won't you get up?"

"What's the matter, Tilly?" said her sister, rolling over, and opening her eyes quietly at Matilda.

"I am going down, Maria, in two minutes; and I cannot do everything, you know."

"Clarissa 'll help."

"If you expect that, Maria, you will be dis-

appointed. I wish you would come right down and make the fire."

Maria lay still. Matilda finished her dressing, and then knelt down by the window.

The burden upon her seemed rather heavy, and she went to her only source of help. Maria lay and looked at the little kneeling figure, so still there by the window; glanced at the growing light outside the window, then at her scattered articles of clothing, lying where she had thrown them or dropped them last night; and at last rolled herself out of bed and was dressing in earnest when Matilda rose up to go downstairs.

"O now you'll soon be ready!" she exclaimed. "Make haste, Maria; and come down to the kitchen. The fire is the first thing."

Then the little feet went with a light tread down the stairs, that she might disturb nobody, and paused in the hall. The light struggling in through the fanlights over the door; the air close; a smell of kerosene in the

parlour; chairs and table in a state of disarrangement; the litter of Clarissa's work on the carpet; the parlour stove cold. Little Matilda wished to herself that some other hands were there, not hers, to do all that must be done. But clearly Maria would never get through with it. She stood looking a minute; then plunged into the work. She opened the shutters and the curtains, and threw up the windows. Then picked up the litter. Then she saw that the services of a broom were needed; and Matilda fetched the broom and brushed out the parlour and the hall. It tired her arms; she was not used to it. Dusting the furniture was more in her line; and then Matilda came to the conclusion that if a fire was to be kindled in time this morning, it must be done by herself; Maria would be fully occupied in the kitchen. So downstairs she went for billets of wood for kindling. There was Maria, in trouble.

"This stove won't draw, Tilly."

"What is the matter?"

"Why *that*. It won't draw. It just smokes."

"It always does draw, Maria."

"Well, it won't to-day."

"Did you put kindling enough in?"

"There's nothing but kindling! — and smoke."

"Why, you've got the damper turned," said Matilda, coming up to look; "see, that's the matter. It won't light with the damper turned."

"Stupid!" Maria muttered; and Matilda went off to make her own fire. Happily that did not smoke. The parlour and hall were all in nice order; the books put in place, and everything ready for the comfort of people when they should come to enjoy it; and Matilda went to join her sister in the kitchen. The fire was going there too, and the kitchen warm, and Maria stood with her hands folded, in front of the stove.

"I don't know what to get for breakfast," she said.

"Is the other room ready?"

"I set the table," said Maria; "but what is to go on it, I don't know."

Matilda went in to look at the state of things; presently called her sister.

"Maria, you didn't sweep the carpet."

"No. Of course I didn't. Rooms don't want to be swept every day."

"This one does. Look at the muss under the table."

"Only some crumbs" — said Maria.

"And a bone. Letty was in a hurry yesterday, I guess. Aunt Candy won't like it, Maria; it won't do."

"I don't care whether she likes it."

"But don't you care whether she scolds? because I do. And the room is not nice, Maria. Mother wouldn't have it so."

"Well, you may sweep it, if you like."

"I cannot. I am tired. You must make it nice, Maria, won't you? and I'll see about the breakfast."

"The table's all set!" Maria remonstrated.

"It won't take long to do it over, Maria. But what have we got for breakfast?"

"Nothing — that I know."

"Did you look in the cellar?"

"No."

"Why, where *did* you look?" said Matilda laughing. "Come — let us go down and see what is there."

In the large, clean, light cellar there were hanging shelves which served the purposes of a larder. The girls peered into the various stores collected on them.

"Here's a dish of cold potatoes," said Maria.

"That will do for one thing," said Matilda.

"Cold?"

"Why, no! fried, Maria."

"I can't fry potatoes."

"Why, yes, you can, Maria; you have seen mamma do it hundreds of times."

"Here's the cold beefsteak that was left yesterday."

"Cold beefsteak isn't good," said Matilda.

"Can't we warm it?"

"How?"

"I don't know; might put it in the oven, it would get hot there. There's a good oven."

"I don't think mamma ever warms cold beefsteak," said Matilda, looking puzzled.

"What does she do with it? she don't throw it away. How do you know she doesn't warm it? you wouldn't know, when you saw it on the table, whether it was just fresh cooked, or only warmed up. How could you tell?"

"Well," said Matilda dubiously, — "you can try. I wish I could ask somebody."

"I shall not ask anybody upstairs," said Maria. "Come — you take the potatoes and I will carry the beefsteak. Then we will make the coffee and have breakfast. I'm as hungry as I can be."

"So am I," said Matilda. And she sighed a little, for she was tired as well as hungry. Maria set the dish of beefsteak in the oven to

get hot, and Matilda made the coffee. She knew quite well how to do that. Then she came to the table where Maria was preparing the potatoes to fry. Maria's knife was going chop, chop, very fast.

"O Maria! you should have peeled them," Matilda exclaimed in dismay.

"Peeled!" — said Maria stopping short.

"Certainly. Why you knew that, Maria. Potatoe parings are not good to eat."

"It takes ages to peel such little potatoes," said Maria.

"But you cannot eat them without being peeled," said Matilda.

"Yes, you can; it won't make any difference. I will fry them so brown, nobody will know whether they have skins on or not."

Matilda doubted very much the feasibility of this plan; but she left Maria, and went off to make sure that the fires in the other rooms were burning right and everything in proper trim. Then she sat down in a rocking

chair in the eating room, to rest; wishing very earnestly that there was somebody to help who knew more about business than either she or Maria. How were they to get along? And she had promised her mother. And yet more, Matilda felt sure that just this work had been given to her and Maria to do by the Lord himself. Therefore they could do it for him. Therefore, all the more, Matilda wanted to do it in the very nicest and best way possible. She wished she had attended when she had seen her mother cooking different things; now she might have known exactly how to manage. And that reminded her, Maria's beef and potatoes must be done. She ran into the kitchen.

"There!" said Maria. "Can you see the skins now?"

"They are brown enough," said Matilda. "But Maria, they'll be very hard!"

"Never you mind!" said Maria complacently.

"Have you looked at your beefsteak?"

"No; but it must be hot before now."

Maria opened the oven door, and then with an exclamation seized a cloth and drew out the dish of meat. The dish took their attention first. It was as brown as Maria's potatoes. It had gone into the oven white.

"It is spoiled," said Matilda.

"Who would have thought the oven was so hot!" said Maria. "Won't it come all right with washing?"

"You might as well wash your beefsteak," said Matilda turning away.

If the dish had gone in white, the meat had also gone in juicy; and if the one was brown, the other was a chip.

"This will not do for breakfast," said Maria lugubriously.

"It is like your potatoes," — said Matilda, with the ineffable little turn of her head.

"Don't, Matilda! What shall we do? the coffee is ready."

"We shall have a brown breakfast," said Matilda. "The coffee will be the lightest

coloured thing on the table." And the two girls relieved themselves with laughing.

"But, Matilda! what shall we *do?* We must have something to eat."

"We can boil some eggs," said Matilda. "Aunt Erminia likes eggs; and the coffee will be good, and the bread. And the potatoes will do to look at."

So it was arranged; and the bell was rung for breakfast only five minutes after the time. And all was in order.

Even Mrs. Candy's good eyes found no fault. And breakfast went forward better than Matilda had dared to hope.

"You have done your potatoes too much, Maria," Mrs. Candy remarked.

"Yes, ma'am," Maria said meekly.

"They want no more but a light colouring. And they should be cut thinner. These are so hard you can't eat them. And, Maria, in future I will tell you what to get for breakfast. I did not know when you went to bed last night, or I should have told you then.

You are not old enough to arrange things. Now there was some beef left from dinner yesterday, that would have made a nice hash."

Maria eat bread and butter and spoke not.

"It will keep very well, and you can make it into hash for to-morrow morning. Chop it as fine as you can, and twice as much potato; and warm it with a little butter and milk and pepper and salt, till it is nice and hot; and poach a few eggs, to lay round it. Can you poach eggs, Maria?"

"Yes, ma'am. But there is no beef, aunt Erminia."

"No beef? You are mistaken. There was a large piece that we did not eat yesterday."

"There is none now," said Maria.

"It must be downstairs in the cellar."

"I am sure it is not, aunt Erminia. I have been poking into every corner there; and there is no beef, I know."

"Maria, that is a very inelegant way of speaking. Where did you get it?"

"I don't know, ma'am, I'm sure. Out of the truth, I suppose. That's what I *did*."

"It is a very inelegant way of doing, as well as of speaking. *Poking* into every thing? What did you poke? your finger? or your hand?"

"My nose, I suppose," said Maria hardily.

"I think I need not tell you that *that* is a very vulgar expression," said Mrs. Candy, with a lofty air; while Clarissa's shoulders gave a little shrug, as much as to say her mother was wasting time. "Don't you know any better, Maria?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then I hope you will speak properly next time."

"One gets so tired of speaking properly!" said Maria.

"*You?*" said Clarissa, with a gentle intonation.

"I don't care!" said Maria desperately.

"People are as they are brought up. My mother don't care for such fidgety notions. I speak to please her, and that is enough."

"No, Maria, it is not enough," resumed Mrs. Candy. "Your mother loves you, and so she is willing to overlook little things in you that she *can* overlook because you are her child; but when you are grown up, you would wish to be liked by other nice people, wouldn't you? people of education, and taste, and elegant habits; and they do not like to have anything to do with people who 'poke their noses' into things, or who say that they do."

"I'll keep in the kitchen then," said Maria hastily.

The breakfast may be said to have ended here; for though a few more mouthfuls were eaten, no more words were said. Mrs. Candy and her daughter left the room and went upstairs. Maria and Matilda began the work of clearing the table.

"Ain't she too much!" Maria exclaimed.

"But, Maria," said her little sister, "I wish you *wouldn't* say such things."

"If I am going to be a kitchen maid," said Maria, "I may as well talk kitchen maid."

"O, I don't think so, Maria."

"I don't care!" said Maria. "I would rather vex aunt Candy than not; and she *was* vexed this morning. She kept it in pretty well; but she was vexed."

"But Maria, that isn't right, is it?"

"Nothing is right," said Maria; "and nothing is going to be, I guess, while they are here."

"Then think, what would mamma do if they went away?"

"I wish I could go away then!" said Maria beginning to cry. "I can't bear to live so! 'Why do you do so,' and 'why do you do *so;*' and Clarissa sitting by with that little smile on her mouth and lifting up her eyes to look at you — it just makes me *mad.* There! It is a pity aunt Candy wasn't here to be shocked at American children."

"But Maria," said Matilda with her eyes swimming too, — "you know the Lord Jesus has given us this work."

"No, I don't!" said Maria; "and what if he did?"

"Why then it would please him — you know, Maria, it would please him — to have us do it just nicely and beautifully, and not like kitchen maids, but like his children. You know, we said we were ready to do any work that he would give us."

"I didn't," said Maria, half crying, half pouting. "I didn't promise to do *this* sort of thing."

"But we mustn't choose," said Matilda.

"But we *did* choose," said Maria. "I said what I would do, and other people said what they would do; and nobody said anything about washing dishes and peeling potatoes. We were not talking of *that*."

"The covenant says, 'we stand ready to do his will.' Don't you know?"

"I believe you know that covenant by

heart," said Maria. "I don't. And I don't care. Matilda, I wish you would run down cellar with the butter and the cream and the bread — will you?"

Matilda did not run, but she made journey after journey down the cellar stairs; with feet that grew weary; and then she dried the china while her sister washed it. Then they brushed up the kitchen and made up the fires. Then Maria seated herself on the kitchen table and looked at Matilda.

"I'm tired now, Tilly."

"So am I."

"Is there anything else to be done?"

"Why there is the dinner, Maria."

"It isn't near dinner time. It is only ten o'clock."

"How long will it take the potatoes to boil?"

"O, not long. It is not time to put them on for a great while."

"But they are not ready, are they?"

"No."

"And what else, Maria?"

Here came a call from the stair head. Maria went to the foot of the stairs to hear what the business was, and came back with her mood nowise sweetened; to judge by the way she went about, filled an iron pot with water and set it on the stove, and dashed things round generally, Matilda looked on without saying a word.

"I've got my day's work cut out for me now," said Maria at last. "There's that leg of mutton to boil, and turnips to be mashed; besides the potatoes. And the turnips have got to be peeled. Come and help me, Tilly, or I shall never get through. Won't you?"

Now Matilda had her own notions about things she liked and things she did not like to do; and one of the things she did not like to do, was to roughen or soil her hands. To put her little hands into the pan of water, and handle and pare the coarse roots with the soil hanging to them, was very distasteful to her nicety. She looked a little dismayed.

But there were the roots all to be pared and washed, and Maria would have her hands full; and was not this also work given to Matilda to do? At any rate she felt that she could not refuse without losing influence over Maria, and that she could not afford. So Matilda's hands and her knife went into the pan. She thought it was very disagreeable, but she did it. After the potatoes and turnips were ready for the pot, Maria demanded her help about other things; she must clean the knives and set the table and prepare the celery and rub the apples; while Maria kept up the fire and attended to the cookery. Matilda did one thing after another; her weary little feet travelled out and in, from one room to the other room, and got things in order for dinner in both places.

It was a pretty satisfactory dinner, on the whole. The mutton was well cooked and the vegetables were not bad, Mrs. Candy said; but Matilda thought with dismay of the after dinner dishes. However, dinner gives courage

sometimes; and both she and Maria were stronger-hearted when they rose from table than when they had sat down. Dishes and pots and kettles, and knives, and endless details beside, were in course of time got rid of; and then Matilda put on her hat and cloak and set forth on an errand she had been meditating.

CHAPTER X.

IT was a soft pleasant day late in March. The snow had all gone for the present. Doubtless it might come back again; no one could tell; in Shadywalk snow was not an unknown visiter even in April; but for the present no such reminder of winter was anywhere to be seen. The air was still and gentle; even the brown tree stems looked softer and less bare than a few weeks ago, though no bursting buds yet were there to make any real change. The note of a bird might be heard now and then; Matilda had twice seen the glorious colour of a blue bird's wings as they spread themselves in the light. It was quite refreshing to get out of the house and the kitchen work, and smell the fresh pure air, and see the sky, and feel that all the world was

not between four walls anywhere. Matilda went softly along, enjoying. At the corner she turned, and walked up Butternut street, so called probably in honour of some former tree of that family; for not a shoot of one was known in the street now. On and on she went, till her church was passed; and then turned down the little lane which led to the parsonage. The snow all gone, it was looking pretty here. On one side the old church, the new lecture room on the other, and between them the avenue of elms, arching their branches over the way and making a vista, at the end of which was the brown door of the parsonage. Always that was a pleasant view to Matilda, for she associated the brown door with a great many things; however, this day she did not seek the old knocker which hung temptingly overhead, but sheered off and went round to the back of the house; and there entered at once, and without knocking, upon Miss Redwood's premises. They were in order; nobody ever saw the parsonage kitchen

otherwise; and Miss Redwood was sitting in front of the stove, knitting.

"Well, if there ain't Tilly Englefield!" was her salutation.

"May I come in, Miss Redwood?—if you are not busy."

"Suppos'n I *was* busy; I guess you wouldn't do me no harm, child. Come right in and sit down, and tell me how's all goin' on at your house. How's your mother, fust thing?"

"Aunt Candy says she's not any better."

"What does your mother say herself?"

"I have not seen her to-day. Aunt Candy says she is nervous; and she wants me not to go into her room."

"Who wants you not to go in? Not your mother?"

"No; aunt Candy."

"I thought so. Well; how do you get along without your sisters, eh? Have you got a girl, or are you goin' to do without?"

"We are going to do without."

"I don't see how you kin, with your mother sick and wantin' somebody to tend her."

"Maria and I do what's to be done. Mamma doesn't want us to get a girl."

"Maria and you!" said Miss Redwood straightening up. "I want to know! You and Maria. Why I didn't reckon Maria was a hand at them kind o' things. What can she do, eh? I want to know! Things is curious in this world."

"Maria can do a good deal," said Matilda.

"And you can too, can't ye?" said Miss Redwood with a benevolent smile at her little visiter, which meant all love and no criticism.

"I wish I knew how to do more," said Matilda. "I *could*, if I knew how. That's what I came to ask you, Miss Redwood; won't you tell me?"

"Tell you anything on arth," said the housekeeper. "What do you want to know child?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, knitting her brow. "I want to know how to *manage*."

Miss Redwood's lips twitched and her knitting needles flew.

"So there ain't no one but you to manage?" she said at length.

"Aunt Candy tells what is to be for breakfast and dinner. But I want to know how to *do* things. What can one do with cold beefsteak, Miss Redwood?"

"'Tain't good for much," said the housekeeper. "Have you got some on hand?"

"No. We had, though."

"And what *did* you do with it?"

"Maria and I put it in the oven to warm; and it spoiled the dish and the meat was all dried up; and then I thought I would come and ask you. And we tried to fry some potatoes this morning, and we didn't know how, I think. They were not good."

"And so your breakfast all fell through, and there was a muss, I expect?"

"No; we had eggs; nobody knew anything about the beefsteak and the dish. But I want to know how to do."

"What ailed your potatoes?"

"They were too hard and too brown."

"I shouldn't wonder! I declare, I 'most think I've got into the middle of a fairy story somewhere. Did you ever hear about Cinderella, Tilly, and her little glass slipper?"

"O yes."

"Some people's chariots and horses will find themselves turned into pun'kins some day; that is what I believe."

"But about the potatoes?" said Matilda, who could not catch the connection of this speech.

"Well; she let 'em be in too long. That was the trouble. If you want to have things right, you must take 'em out when they are done, honey."

"But how can we tell when they are done?"

"Why, you know by just lookin' at 'em. There ain't no great trouble about it; anyhow there ain't about potatoes. You just put some fat in a pan, and chop up your potatoes, and when the fat is hot clap 'em in,

and let 'em frizzle round a spell; and then when they're done you take 'em up. Did you sprinkle salt in?"

"No."

"You must mind and sprinkle salt in, while they're in the pan; without that they'll taste kind o' flat."

"Aunt Erminia don't like them chopped up. She wants them cut in thin slices and browned on both sides."

"Laws a massy! why don't she do 'em so, then? what hinders her?" said the housekeeper looking at Matilda. "I thought she was one o' them kind o' folks as don't know nothing handy. Why don't she do her own potatoes, and as brown as she likes, Tilly?"

"Mamma wants *us* to take care of things, Miss Redwood."

"Won't let your aunt learn you, nother?" said Miss Redwood, sticking one end of her knitting needle behind her ear and slowly scratching with it, while she looked at Matilda.

"Aunt Candy does not like to do anything

in the kitchen; and I would rather you would teach me, Miss Redwood — if you would."

"And can you learn Maria?"

"O yes.

"Well, come along; what do you want to know next?"

"I wish you'd teach me some time how to make gingerbread. And pies."

The housekeeper glanced at the clock, and then bade Matilda take off her things.

"Now?" said Matilda hesitating.

"You can't do nothing any time but now," said Miss Redwood, as she put away her work in its basket. "You can *think* of doing it; but if you ever come to doing it, you will find it is *now*."

"But is it convenient?"

"La, child, I don't know what people mean by convenient. You look at it one way, and there is nothing convenient; and you look at it another way, and there is nothing but what *is*. Hang your things over that chair; and I'll put an apron on you."

"But which way does it look this afternoon, Miss Redwood?"

The housekeeper laughed, and kissed Tilly whom she was arraying in a great check apron, big enough to cover her.

"It is just how you choose to take it," she said. "I declare I'm sorry for the folks as is tied to convenience; they don't get the right good of their life. Why honey, what isn't my convenience is somebody else's convenience, maybe. I want it to be sunshine very often, so as I kin dry my clothes; when the farmers want it to be rain to make their corn and cabbages grow. It is sure to be convenient for somebody."

"But I want it to be convenient for you this afternoon," said Matilda wistfully.

"Well, 'tis," said the housekeeper. "There—wash your hands in that bowl, dear; and here's a clean towel for you. A body as wants to have things convenient, had better not be a minister's housekeeper. No, the place is nice enough," she went on, as she

saw Matilda's eye glance around the kitchen; "'tain't that; but I always think convenient means having your own way; and *that* nobody need expect to do at the parsonage. Just so sure as I make pot pie, Mr. Richmond 'll hev to go to a funeral, and it's spiled or lost, for he's no time to eat it; and I never cleaned up that hall and steps yet, but an army of boots and shoes came tramping over it out of the dirt; when if it *wants* cleaning, it'll get leave to be without a foot crossing it all the afternoon. And if it's bakin' day, I have visiters, and have to run between them and the oven, till I don't know which end is the parlour; and that's the way, Tilly; and I don't know no better way but to conclude that somebody else's convenience is yourn — and then you'll live in clover. The minister had to preach to me a good while before I could see it, though. Now, honey, sift your flour; — here it is. Kin you do it?"

Matilda essayed to do it, and the housekeeper looked on.

"The damper is turned," she said; "we'll have the oven hot by the time the cake is ready. Now, dear, what's going into it?"

"Will that be enough?" said Matilda, lifting her floury hand out of the pan.

"*I* want a piece," said the housekeeper; "so there had better go another bowlful. And the minister — *he* likes a bite of hot gingerbread, when he can get it. So shake it in, dear. That will do. Now, what are you going to put in it, Tilly? — besides flour."

"Why, *I* don't know," said Matilda.

"Well, guess. What do you think goes into gingerbread?"

"Molasses?"

"Yes; but that goes one of the last things. Ain't you going to put no shortening in?"

"Shortening? what is that?" said Matilda.

"Well, it's whatever you've got. Butter 'll do, if it's nice and sweet — like this is — or sweet drippings 'll do, or a little sweet lard, maybe. We'll take the butter to-day, for this is going to do you and me credit. Now think

—what else? Put the butter right there, in the middle, and rub it into the flour with the flat of your hand, so. Rub hard, dear; get the butter all in the flour, so you can't see it. What is to go in next?"

"Spice? I think mamma puts spice."

"If you like it. What spice will you choose?"

"I don't know, Miss Redwood."

"Well, it'd be queer gingerbread without ginger, wouldn't it?"

"O yes. I forgot the ginger, to be sure. How much?"

"That's 'cordin' as you like it. *That* won't hardly taste, dear; 'tain't just like red pepper; take a good cupful. Now just a little bit of cloves?"

"And cinnamon?"

"It'll be spice gingerbread, sure enough," said the housekeeper. "And salt, Tilly."

"Salt? Must salt go in?" said Matilda, who had got very eager now in her work.

"Salt's univarsal," said Miss Redwood. "'Cept sweetmeats, it goes into everything. That's what makes all the rest good. I never could see what was the use o' salt, till one day the minister, he preached a sermon on 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' and ever since that it seems to kind o' put me in mind. And then I asked Mr. Richmond if *everything* meant something."

"But what does that mean? that you said?" said Matilda. "Good people don't make the rest of the world good."

"They give all the taste there is to it, though," said the housekeeper. "And I asked that very question myself of the minister; and what do you think he told me?"

"What?"

"He said it was because the salt warn't of as good quality as it had ought to be. And *that* makes me think, too. But la! look at your gingerbread standing still. Now see, dear — here's a bowl o' buttermilk for you; it's as rich as cream, a'most — and I take and

put in a spoonful of — you know what this is?"

"Salæratus?"

"That's it."

"We use soda at our house."

"Salæratus is good enough for me," said Miss Redwood; "and I know what it'll do; so I'm never put out in my calculations. Now when it foams up — see, — now mix your cake, dear, as quick as you like. Stop — wait — let's get the molasses in. Now go on. I declare, having two pair o' hands kind o' puts one out. Stir it up — don't be afraid."

Matilda was not afraid, and was very much in earnest. The gingerbread was quickly mixed, and for a few minutes there was busy work, buttering the pans and putting the mixture in them, and setting the pans in the oven. Then Matilda washed her hands; the housekeeper put the flour and spices away; and the two sat down to watch the baking.

"It'll be good," said the housekeeper.

"I hope it will," said Matilda.

"I know 'twill," said Miss Redwood. "You do your part right; and these sort o' things — flour, and butter, and meat, and potatoes, and that — don't never disappint you. That's one thing that is satisfactory in this world."

"But mamma has her cake spoiled in the oven sometimes."

"'Twarn't the oven's fault," said Miss Redwood. "Did ye think it was? Ovens don't do that for me, never."

"But sometimes the oven was too hot," said Matilda; "and other times she said it was not hot enough."

"Of course!" said the housekeeper; "and then again other times she forgot to look at it, maybe, and left her cake in too long. The cake couldn't knock at the door of the oven, to be let out; that'd be too much to ask Now look at yourn, dear."

Matilda opened the oven door and shut it again.

"What's the appearance of it?"

"It is coming up beautifully. But it isn't up in the middle yet."

"The fire's just right," said the housekeeper.

"But how can you *tell*, Miss Redwood?" said Matilda, standing by the stove with a most careful set of wrinkles on her little brow.

"Tell?" said the housekeeper; "just as you tell anything else; after you've seen it fifty times, you know."

Matilda began a painful calculation of how often she could make something to bake, and how long it would be till fifty times had made her wise in the matter; when an inner door opened, and the minister himself came upon the scene. Matilda coloured, and looked a little abashed; the housekeeper smiled.

"I am very glad to see you here, Tilly," Mr. Richmond said heartily. "What are you and Miss Redwood doing here?"

"We are getting ready for the business of life," said the housekeeper. "The minis-

ter knows there are different ways of doin' that."

"Just what way are you taking now?" said Mr. Richmond laughing. "It seems to me, you think the business of life is eating—if I may judge by the smell of the preparation."

"It is time you looked at your cake, Tilly," said Miss Redwood; and she did not offer to help her; so, blushing more and more, Matilda was obliged to open the oven door again and shew that she was acting baker. The eyes of the two older persons met in a way that was pleasant to see.

"What's here, Tilly?" said the minister, coming nearer and stooping to look in himself.

"Miss Redwood has been teaching me how to make gingerbread. O Miss Redwood, it is beginning to get brown at the end."

"Turn the pans round then. It ain't done yet."

"No, it isn't done, for it is not quite up

in the middle. There is a sort of hollow place."

"Shut up your oven, child, and it will be all right in a few minutes."

"Then I think this is the night when you are going to stay and take tea with me," said Mr. Richmond. "I promised you a roast apple, I remember. Are there any more apples that will do for roasting, Miss Redwood?"

"O, Mr. Richmond, I do not care for the apple!" Matilda cried.

"But if I don't have it, you will stay and take tea with me?"

Matilda looked wistful, and hesitated. Her mother would not miss her; but could Maria get the tea without her?—

"And I dare say you want to talk to me about something; isn't it so?" the minister continued.

"Yes, Mr. Richmond; I do."

"That settles it. She will stay, Miss Redwood. I shall have some gingerbread, I hope.

And when you are ready, Tilly, you can come to me in my room."

The minister quitted the kitchen, in good time; for now the cakes were almost done and needed care. A little watchful waiting, and then the plumped up, brown, glossy loaves of gingerbread said to even an inexperienced eye that it was time for them to come out of the oven. Miss Redwood shewed Matilda how to arrange them on a sieve, where they would not get steamy and moist; and Matilda's eye surveyed them there with very great satisfaction.

"That's as nice as if I had made it myself," said the housekeeper. "Now don't you want to get the minister's tea?"

"What shall I do, Miss Redwood?"

"I thought maybe you'd like to learn how to manage something else. He's had no dinner to-day — to speak of — and if eatin' ain't the business of life, which it ain't, I guess, with him; yet stoppin' eatin' would stop business, he'd find; and I'm goin' to frizzle some beef

for his supper, and put an egg in. Now I'll cut the beef — and you can stir it, if you like."

Matilda liked very much. She watched the careful shaving of the beef in paper-like fragments; then at the housekeeper's direction she put some butter in a pan on the fire, and when it was hot threw the beef in and stirred it back and forward with a knife, so as not to let it burn and so as to bring all the shavings of beef in contact with the hot pan bottom and into the influence of the boiling butter. At the moment of its being done, the housekeeper broke an egg or two into the pan; and then in another moment bade Matilda take it from the fire and turn it out. Meanwhile Miss Redwood had cut bread and made the tea.

"Now you can go and call the minister," she said.

Matilda thought she was having the rarest of pleasant times, as she crossed the little dining room and the square yard of hall that

came next, and went into the study. Fire was burning in the wide chimney there as usual; the room was very sweet and still; Mr Richmond sat before the fire with a book.

"I thought you were coming to talk to me, Tilly?" he said, stretching out his hand to draw her up to him.

"Miss Redwood was shewing me how to do things, Mr. Richmond."

"Then you *do* want to talk to me?"

"O yes, sir. But Mr. Richmond, tea is ready."

"We'll eat first then, and talk afterward. What is the talk to be about, Tilly? just to give me an idea."

"It is about — I do not know what is right about something, Mr. Richmond. I do not know what I ought to do."

"Have you looked in the Bible to find out?"

"No, sir. I didn't know where to look, Mr. Richmond."

"Have you prayed about it?"

Matilda hesitated, but finally said again, "No."

"That is another thing you can always do. The Lord understands your difficulties better than any one else can, and knows just what answer to give you."

"But—an answer? will he give it always?"

"Always; provided you are perfectly willing to take it, whatever it may be; and provided you do your part."

"What is my part?"

"If I sent you to find your way along a road you did not know, where there were guide posts set up; what would be your part to do?"

"To mind the guide posts?"

"Yes, and go on as they bade you. That is not to prevent your asking somebody you meet on the road, if you are going right? Now Miss Redwood has rung her bell, and you and I must obey it."

"But, what are the guide posts, Mr. Richmond?"

"We will see about that after tea Come."

Matilda gave one wondering thought to the question how Maria and tea would get along without her at home; and then she let all that go, and resolved to enjoy the present while she had it. Certainly it was very pleasant to take tea with Mr. Richmond. He was so very kind, and attentive to her wants; and so amusing in his talk; and the new gingerbread looked so very handsome, piled up in the cake basket; and Miss Redwood was such a variety after Mrs. Candy. Matilda let care go. And when it came to eating the gingerbread, it was found to be excellent. Mr. Richmond said he wished she would come often and make some for him.

"Do you know there is a meeting of the Band this evening?"

"I had forgotten about it, Mr. Richmond —I have been so busy."

"It is lucky you came to take tea with me, then," said he. "Perhaps you would have

forgotten it altogether. What is Maria doing?"

"She is busy at home, Mr. Richmond."

"I am sorry for that. To-night is the night for questions,—I am prepared to receive questions from everybody. Have you got yours ready?"

"About Band work, Mr. Richmond?"

"Yes, about Band work. Though you know that is only another name for the Lord's work, whatever it may be that he gives us to do. Now we will go to my study and attend to the business we were talking about."

So they left Miss Redwood to her tea-table; and the minister and his little guest found themselves alone again.

"Now, Tilly, what is it?" he said as he shut the door.

"Mr. Richmond," said Matilda anxiously, "I want to know if I must mind what aunt Erminia says?"

"Mrs. Candy?" said Mr. Richmond, looking surprised.

"Yes, sir."

"The question is, whether you must obey her?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should say, if you doubt about any of her commands, you had better ask your mother, Tilly."

"But I cannot see my mother, Mr. Richmond; that is one of the things. Mamma is sick, and aunt Candy has forbidden me to go into her room. Must I stay out?"

"Is your mother so ill?"

"No sir, I do not think she is; I don't know; but aunt Candy says she is nervous; and I must not go in there without leave." And Matilda raised appealing eyes to the minister.

"That is hard, Tilly. I am very sorry to hear it. But I am of opinion that the authority of nurses must not be disputed. I think if Mrs. Candy says stay out, you had better stay out."

"And everything else?" said Matilda.

"Must I mind what she says in everything else?"

"Are you under her orders, Matilda?"

"That is what I want to know, Mr. Richmond. She says so. She told me not to go out to church last Sunday night; and all the others were going, and I went too; and she scolded about it and said I must mind her. Must I?—in everything? I can't ask mamma."

Mr. Richmond turned a paper-weight over and over two or three times without speaking.

"You know what the fifth commandment is, Tilly."

"Yes, Mr. Richmond. But she is not my mother."

"Don't you think she is in your mother's place just now? Would not your mother wish that your obedience should be given to your aunt for the present?"

Matilda looked grave, not to say gloomy.

"I can tell you what will make it easy,"

said Mr. Richmond. "Do it for the sake of the Lord Jesus. He set us an example of obedience to all lawful authorities; he has commanded us to live in peace with everybody as far as we possibly can; and to submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God. Besides that, I must think, Tilly, the command to obey our parents means also that we should obey whoever happens to stand in our parents' place to us. Will it not make it easy to obey your aunt, if you think that you are doing it to please God?"

"Yes, Mr. Richmond," Matilda said thoughtfully.

"I always feel that God's command sweetens anything," the minister went on. "Do you feel so?"

"I think I do;" the little girl answered.

"So if you stay at home for Mrs. Candy's command, you may reflect that it is for Jesus' sake; and that will please him a great deal better than your going to church to please yourself."

"Yes, Mr. Richmond," Matilda said cheerfully.

"Was that all you had to talk to me about?"

"Yes, sir — all except about Band work."

"We will talk about that in the meeting. If you have a question to ask, write it here; and I will take it in and answer it."

He gave Matilda paper and pen, and himself put on his overcoat. Then taking her little slip of a question, the two went together into the Lecture room.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a good little gathering of the Workers, many of whom were quite young persons. Among them Matilda was not a little surprised to see Maria. But she warily sheered off from comments and questions, and took a seat in another part of the room.

"We are here for a good talk to-night," said the minister, after they had sung and prayed. "I stand ready to meet difficulties and answer questions. All who have any more little notes to lay on the desk, please bring or send them up, or ask their questions by word of mouth. I will take the first of these that comes to hand."

Mr. Richmond unfolded a paper and read it over to himself, in the midst of a hush of expectation. Then he read it aloud.

"If a member of the Relief Committee visits a sick person in want of help, and finds another member of some other Committee giving the help and doing the work of the Relief Committee, which of them should take care of the case?"

"It is almost as puzzling," said Mr. Richmond, "as that other question, what husband the woman should have in the other world who had had seven in this. But as we are not just like the angels in heaven yet, I should say in this and similar cases, that the one who first found and undertook the case should continue her care, — or his care, — if he or she be so minded. The old rule of 'first come, first served,' is a good one, I think. The Relief Committee has no monopoly of the joy of helping others. Let us see what comes next."

"There are four people I know, who go to read the Bible to one blind person — and I know of at least two who are sick and unable to read, that nobody goes to."

"Want of system," said Mr. Richmond looking up. "The head of the Bible-reading Committee should be told of these facts."

"She has been told," said a lady in the company.

"Then doubtless the irregularity will be set to rights."

"No, it is not so certain; for the blind person lives where it is easy to attend her; and the sick people are in Lilac lane — out of the way, and in a disagreeable place."

"Does the head of the Bible-reading Committee decline these cases, having nobody that she can send to them?"

"She says she does not know whom to send."

"I will thank you for the names of those two cases by and by, Mrs. Norris; I think I can get them supplied. The question of theory I will handle presently, before we separate."

"Here is another request," said Mr. Richmond, who knew Matilda's handwriting, -

"from a dear child, who asks to know 'what we shall do, when people will not hear the message we carry?' Why try again. Go and tell them again; and never mind rebuffs if you get them. People did not listen to our Master; it is no matter of wonder if they refuse to hear us. But he did not stop his labours for that; neither must we. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' I give her that for her watchword;—'*If we faint not*,' remember.

"The next question in my hand is, 'what we are to do about welcoming strangers?' The writer states, that six new scholars have lately come to the school, and to her certain knowledge only two of them have received any welcome.

"Well,"—said Mr. Richmond thoughtfully, "I must come to the words I had chosen to talk to you about. They answer a great many things. You all remember a verse in the epistle to the Ephesians which speaks of

'redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

"I dare say it has puzzled some of you, as it used once to puzzle me. How are we to 'redeem the time'? Another translation of the passage will perhaps be clearer and help us to understand. '*Buying up opportunities.*' The words are so rendered by a late great authority. I don't know but you will at first think it just as hard to comprehend. How are we to 'buy up opportunities'?"

"I am sure *I* don't know," said Mrs. Swan, Ailie's mother. "I always thought opportunities were given."

"So they are. But the privilege of using them, we often must buy."

"I don't see how."

"Let us come to facts, Mrs. Swan. Here are four opportunities in the school, in the shape of new members added to it. How comes it these opportunities have not been used? There are two other grand opportunities in Lilac lane."

"Are we to buy them?" said Mrs. Trembleton.

"I do not see how else the difficulty can be met. They are worth buying. But the next question is, What will you pay?"

There was a long silence, which nobody seemed inclined to break.

"I think you see, my dear friends, what I mean. For welcoming those four strangers, somebody must give up his ease for a moment — must make a little sacrifice of comfort. It will be very little indeed, for these things pay as we go; we get our return promptly. The opportunities in Lilac lane must be bought, perhaps, with some giving up of time; of pleasure, perhaps; perhaps we must pay some annoyance. It is so with most of our opportunities, dear friends. He who serves God with what costs him nothing, will do very little service, you may depend on it. Christ did not so; who 'though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' He 'pleased not

himself.' And we, if we are his servants, must be ready to give *everything*, if need be, even our lives also, to the work he calls us to do. We must buy up opportunities with all our might, paying not only time and money, but love and patience and self-denial and self-abasement and labour and pains-taking. We cannot be right servants of God — or happy servants — and keep back anything. 'Let a man so account of us, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;' and let us see that all the grace he gives us we use to the very uttermost for his glory — in 'works and love and service and faith and patience and works.'— My dear friends, if we have only *love* in our hearts, love will buy up opportunities as fast as they come; and always have the right money."

Mr. Richmond said no more, but after another hymn and a prayer dismissed the assembly. Maria and Matilda presently found themselves side by side in the street.

"Maria," said the younger one, "don't you

think you and I will go and read to those two poor people in the lane?"

"I guess I will!" said Maria,—"when I get done being chief cook and bottle-washer to Mrs. Minny Candy."

"But before that, Maria?"

"When shall I go?" said Maria sharply. "When it is time to get breakfast? or when the potatoes are on for dinner? or when I am taking the orders for tea? Don't be a goose, Matilda, if you can help it."

"We haven't much time," said Matilda sighing.

"And I am not going to Lilac lane, if I had it. There are enough other people to do that."

"O Maria!"

"Well, 'O Maria,'—there are."

"But they do not go."

"That's their look out."

"And Maria, you see what Mr. Richmond thinks about the Dows."

"I don't see any such thing."

"You heard him to-night."

"He didn't say a word about the Dows."

"But about trying again, he did. O Maria, I've thought a great many times of that Dows' house."

"So have I," said Maria, — "what fools we were."

"Why?"

"Why, because it was no use."

"Mr. Richmond doesn't think so."

"He's welcome to go and try for himself. *I* am not going again."

"What is the matter, Maria?"

"Nothing is the matter."

"But Maria, ever since you joined the Band, I cannot remember once seeing you 'buy up opportunities.' If you loved Jesus, I think you would."

"I wouldn't preach," said Maria. "That is one thing I wouldn't do. If I was better than my neighbours, I'd let them be the ones to find it out."

Matilda was silent till they reached home.

"Where have you been, Matilda?" said her aunt opening the parlour door.

"To see Miss Redwood, aunt Candy."

"Ask me, next time, before going anywhere. Here has Maria had everything to do since five hours ago,—all alone."

Matilda shut her lips firmly,—if her head took a more upright set on her shoulders she did not know it,—and went upstairs after her sister.

"How is mamma, Maria?" she asked when she got there.

"I don't know. Just the same."

The little girl sighed.

"What is to be for breakfast?"

"Fish balls."

"You do not know how to make them."

"Aunt Erminia told me. But I shall want your help, Tilly, for the fish has to be carefully picked all to pieces; and if we leave a bit as big as a sixpence, there'll be a row."

"But the fish isn't soaked, Maria."

"It is in hot water, on the stove now. It will be done by morning."

Matilda sighed again deeply, and knelt down before the table where her Bible was open. "Buying up opportunities" floated through her head; with "works and love and service and faith and patience and works"*— "Christ pleased not himself"—and the little girl's head went down upon the open page. How much love she must have, to meet all the needs for it! to do all the works, have all the patience, buy up all the opportunities! Tilly's one prayer was that she might be full of love, first to God and then to everybody.

Such prayers are apt to be answered; and the next morning saw her go through all the details of its affairs with a quiet patience and readiness which must have had a deep spring somewhere. She helped Maria in the tedious picking out of the fish; she roasted her cheeks in frying the balls, while her sister was making porridge; she attended to the coffee; and she

* Alford's translation.

met her aunt and cousin at breakfast with an unruffled quiet sweetness of temper. It was just the drop of oil needed to keep things going smoothly; for Maria was tired and out of humour, and Mrs. Candy disposed to be ill pleased with both the girls for their being out at the Band meeting. She did not approve of the whole thing, she said. However, the sunshine scattered the clouds away. And when, after a busy morning and a pretty well got-up dinner, Matilda asked leave to go out and take a walk, she had her reward. Mrs. Candy gave permission.

"Won't you come too, Maria?" she asked when they went to their own room.

"There's no fun in walking," Maria answered disconsolately.

"I am going to Lilac lane."

"I hope you don't think there is any fun in *that*."

"But Maria!" —

"Well, what?"

"I think there is something a great deal better than fun"

"You may have it all then, for me."

"Maria," said her little sister gently, "I wish you wouldn't mind. Mamma will get well by and by, and this will be all over; and we are getting along so nicely. Aunt Candy was quite pleased with the dinner."

"There's another dinner to get to-morrow," said Maria; "and I don't know what you mean by this being 'all over' when mamma gets well. What difference will her getting well make? She will help, to be sure; but we should have the same things to do — just the same."

Matilda had not reckoned on that, for she looked sober a minute or two.

"Well, Maria," she said then, clearing up, "I don't care. If Jesus has given us this to do, you know, I *like* to do it; because he has given it to us to do."

Maria turned away impatiently.

"Maria," said her little sister, drawing nearer and speaking solemnly, "do you intend to ask Mr. Richmond to baptize

you the next time he has the baptismal service?"

"If I do," said Maria, "*you* need not trouble yourself about it."

And Matilda thought she had better let the subject and her sister both alone for the present. She had got herself ready, and now taking her Bible she went out. It was but a little way to the corner. There she turned, in the opposite direction from the one which would have taken her to church, and crossed the main street. In that direction, further on, lay the way to Lilac lane; but at the other corner of the street Matilda found an interruption. Somebody stopped her, whom she knew the next instant to be Norton Laval.

"Why, it is Matilda Englefield!" he said. "You are just the one I want to see."

"Am I?" said Matilda.

"I should think so. Come along — our house lies that way — don't you recollect?"

"O but I am not going that way now," said Matilda.

"O yes, but you are! Mamma says contradicting is very rude, but I can't help it sometimes. Can you help it, Matilda?"

"People ought to be contradicted sometimes," Matilda said with an arch bridling of her head, which, to be sure, the child was quite unconscious of.

"Not I," said Norton. "Come!"

"O but I cannot, Norton. I wish I could. Not this time."

"Where are you going?"

"Up that way."

"Nobody lives up that way."

"Nobody? Just look at the houses."

"Nobody lives in those houses," said Norton.

"O very well; then I am going to see nobody."

"No, Matilda; you are coming to see mamma. And I have something to shew you; a new beautiful game, which mamma nas got for me; we are going to play it on the lawn, when the grass is in order, by and

by; and I want you to come and see it now, and learn how to play. Come, Matilda, I want to shew it to you."

Matilda hesitated. It did not seem very easy to get rid of Norton; but what would become of the poor people in Lilac lane? Would another time do for them? — here was Norton waiting for her. And a little play would be so pleasant. As she stood irresolute, Norton, putting his arm round her affectionately, and applying a little good-humoured force, gave her shoulders without much difficulty the turn he wished them to take. The two began to move down the street towards Norton's home. But as soon as this was done, Matilda began to have qualms about her dress. Norton was in a brown suit that fitted him, fresh and handsome; his cap sat jauntily on his thick wavy hair; he was nice from head to foot. And Matilda had come out in the home dress she had worn while she and Maria had been washing up the dinner dishes. Looking

down, she could see a little wet spot on the skirt now. That would dry. But then her boots were her every day boots, and they were a little rusty; and she had on her common school hat. The only thing new and bright about her was her Bible under her arm. As her eye fell upon it, so did her companion's eye.

"What book have you got there?" he asked, and then put out his hand to take it. "A Bible! Where were you going with this, Matilda?"

"It is my Bible," said the little girl.

"Yes; but you do not take your Bible out to walk with you, do you, as babies do their dolls?"

"Of course not."

"Then what for, Matilda?"

"Business."

"What sort of business?"

"Why do you want to know, Norton? It was private business."

"I like that," said Norton. "Why do I

want to know? Because you are Matilda Englefield, and I like to know all about you."

"You do not know much yet," said Matilda, looking with a pleased look, however, up into her companion's face. It was smiling at her, with a complacent look to match.

"I shan't know *much* when I know all," he said. "How old are you? You can't make much history in ten years."

"No, not much," said Matilda. "But still — it may not be history to other people, but I think it is to oneself."

"What?"

"O, one's life, you know."

"But ten years is not a life," said Norton.

"It is, if one hasn't lived any longer."

"I would like my life to be history to other people," said Norton. "Something worth while."

"I wouldn't like other people to know my life, though," said Matilda.

"Then could not help it, if it was something worth while," said Norton.

"Why yes, Norton; one's life is what one thinks and feels; what nobody knows. Not the things that everybody knows."

"It is what one *does*," said Norton; "and if you do anything worth while, people will know it. I wonder what there will be to tell of you and me fifty years from now?"

"Fifty years! Why, then I should be sixty-one," said Matilda; "and you would be a good deal more than that. But perhaps we shall not live to be so old."

"Yes we shall," said Norton. "*I* shall; and you must, too."

"Why, Norton, we can't *make* ourselves live," said Matilda, in great astonishment at this language.

"We shall live to be old, though," said Norton. "I know it. And I wish there may be something to be said of *me*. I don't think women ought to be talked of."

"I do not see what good it would do anybody to be talked of, after he has gone away out of the world," said Matilda. "Except to

be talked of in heaven. That would be good."

"In heaven!" said Norton. "Talked of in heaven! Where did you get that?"

"I don't mean that exactly," said Matilda. "But some people will."

"Who?"

"Why, a great many people, Norton. Abraham, and Noah, and David, and Daniel, and the woman that put all she had into the Lord's treasury, and the woman that anointed the head of Jesus — the woman who, he said, had done what she could. I would like to have *that* said of me, if it was Jesus that said it."

Norton took hold of Matilda and gave her a little good-humoured shake. "Stop that!" he said; "and tell me is that why you are carrying a Bible out here in the streets?"

"O I haven't any use for it here, Norton."

"Then what have you got it here for?"

"Norton, there are some people in the vil-

lage who are sick, or cannot read; and I was going to read to them."

"Where are they?"

"In Lilac lane."

"Where is that?"

"You go up past the corner a good way, and just by Mr. Barth's foundry you turn down a few steps, and turn again at the baker's. Then, a little way further on, you strike into the lane."

"That's it, is it? I know. But do you know what sort of people live up that way?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's another thing you *don't* know, and that's the mud. You'd never have got out again, if you had gone to Lilac lane to-day. It is three feet deep; and it weighs twenty pounds a foot. After you set your shoe in it you want a windlass to get it out again."

"What is a windlass?" Matilda asked.

"Don't you know? Well, you *are* a girl;

but you are a brick. I'll teach you about a windlass, and lots of things."

"I shouldn't think you would want to teach me, *because* I am a girl," said Matilda.

They had reached the iron gate of Mrs. Laval's domain, walking fast as they had talked; and in answer to Matilda's last remark, Norton opened the gate for her, and took off his cap with an air as he held it for her to pass in. Matilda looked, smiled, and stepped past him.

"You are not like any boy I ever saw," she remarked, when he had recovered his cap and his place beside her.

"I hope you like me better than any one you ever saw?"

"Yes," said Matilda, "I do."

The boy's answer, was to do what most boys are too shy or too proud for. He put his arms round Matilda and gave her a hearty kiss. Matilda was greatly surprised, and bridled a little, as if she thought Norton had taken a liberty; but on the whole seemed to

recognize the fact that they were very good friends, and took this as a seal of it. Norton led her into the house, got his croquet box, and brought her and it out again to the little lawn before the door. Nobody else was visible. The day was still, dry, and sunny, and though the grass was hardly green yet and not shaven nor rolled nor anything that a croquet lawn ought to be, still it would do, as Norton said, to look at. Matilda stood by and listened intently, while he planted his hoops and shewed his mallets and explained to her the initial mysteries of the game. They even tried how it would go; and there was no doubt of one thing, the time went almost as fast as the croquet balls.

"I must run home, Norton," Matilda said at last.

"Why? I don't think so."

"I know I must."

"Well, do you like it?" He meant the game.

"O it's delightful!" was Matilda's honest

exclamation. Norton pushed back his cap and looked at her, pleased on his part. It came into Matilda's head that she ought to tell him something. Their two faces had grown to be so friendly to each other.

"Norton," she said gravely, "I want you to know something about me."

"Yes," said Norton. "I want to know it."

"You don't know what it is."

"That's the very thing. I *want* to know it."

"Norton — did you ever see anybody baptized?"

"Babies" — said Norton, after a moment's recollection.

"Well, if you would like to see me baptized, come to our church, Sunday after next."

"You?" said Norton. "Haven't you been baptized?"

"Not yet."

"I thought everybody was. Then if you have not been yet, why do you? Whose notion is that?"

"It is mine."

"*Your* notion?" said Norton examining her. "What do you mean by that, Matilda?"

"I mean, I want to be baptized; and Mr. Richmond is going to do it for me."

"What's it for? what's the use? I wouldn't if I were you."

"It is joining the church. Don't you understand, Norton?"

"Not a bit. That is something I never did understand. Do you understand it?"

"Why yes, certainly."

"Let's hear, then," said Norton, putting up his croquet balls.

"Mr. Richmond has explained it so much, you know, I couldn't help but understand."

"O it's Mr. Richmond, is it?"

"No; it's the Bible."

"Let's hear, then," said Norton. "Go on."

Matilda hesitated. She found a difficulty in saying all her mind to him; she did not know whether it was best; and with that she had

a suspicion that perhaps she ought to do it. She glanced at him, and looked away, and glanced again; and tried to make up her mind. Norton was busy putting up his croquet hoops and mallets; but his face looked so energetic and wide awake, and his eye was so quick and strong, that she was half afraid to say something that might bring an expression of doubt or ridicule upon it. Then Norton looked up at her again, a keen look enough, but so full of pleasure in her that Matilda's doubts were resolved. He would not be unkind; she would venture it.

"I want you to know about me, Norton," she began again.

"Well," said Norton, "so do I; but it seems difficult, somehow."

"You do not think that, for you are laughing."

Norton gave her another look, laughing rather more; and then he came and stood close beside her.

"What is it, Matilda?" he asked.

"I don't want you to think that I am good," she said, looking up earnestly and timidly, "for I am not; but I want to be; and being baptized is a sign of belonging to the Lord Jesus, so I want to be baptized."

"It isn't a sign of anything good," said Norton. "Lots of people are baptized, that aren't anything else, I know. Lots of them, Matilda. That don't change them."

"No, that don't change them, Norton; but when they *are* changed, then the Bible says they must be baptized."

"What for?"

"It is just telling everybody what they believe, and what they are. It's a *sign*."

"Then when you are baptized, as you mean to be, that will be telling everybody what *you* believe and what you are?"

"Yes."

"It would not tell me," said Norton, "because I should not understand the sign. I wish you would tell me now in words, Matilda."

"I don't know if I can, but I'll try. You know water makes things clean, Norton?"

"Sometimes."

"Well if it is used it does," said Matilda. "The water is a sign that I believe the Lord Jesus will take away my sins and make me clean, and good, if I trust him; that he will wash my heart, and that he has begun to do it. And it will be a sign that I am his servant, because that is what he has commanded his servants."

"What?"

"That; to be baptized, and join the church."

"Matilda, a great many people are baptized, and keep all their sins just the same."

"O, but those are make-believe people."

"No, they are not; they are real people."

"I mean, they are make-believe Christians."

"How do you know but you are?"

"I *think* I know," said Matilda, looking down.

"But other people won't know. Your

being baptized will not mean anything to them, only that somebody has coaxed you into it."

"It will mean all that, Norton; and if I am true they will *see* it means all that."

"They might see it all the same without your being baptized. What difference would that make?"

"It is *obedience*," said Matilda firmly. "And not to do it would be disobedience. And it is profession of faith; and not to do it, would be to say that I don't believe."

Norton looked amused, and pleased, and a little puzzled.

"You have not told me anything about you, after all," he said; "for I knew it all before."

"How did you know it?"

"Not this about your being baptized, you know, but about *you*."

"What about me?"

"I say, Matilda, when will you come and play croquet again?"

"I don't know. But oh, Norton, I must go now. I forgot all about it. And there was something else I wanted to say. I wish you would be a servant of Jesus too?"

Matilda gave this utterance a little timidly. But Norton only looked at her and smiled, and finally closed the question by taking her in his arms and giving her two kisses this time. It was done without a bit of shamefacedness on his part, and with the energy and the tenderness too of affection. Matilda was extremely astonished and somewhat discomposed; but the evident kindness excused the freedom, and on the whole she found nothing to object. Norton opened the iron gate for her, and she hurried off homewards without another word.

In a dream of pleasure she hurried along, feeling that Norton Laval was a great gain to her, and that croquet was the most delightful of amusements, and that all the weariness of the day's work was taken out of her heart. She only regretted, as she went, that those

poor people in Lilac lane had heard no reading; but she resolved she would go to them to-morrow.

There is one time, however, for doing everything that ought to be done; and if that time is lost, no human calculation can make sure a second opportunity. Matilda was to find this in the case of Lilac lane. The next day weather kept her at home. The second day she was too busy to go on such an expedition. The third was Sunday. And when Monday came, all thoughts of what she had intended to do were put out of her head by her mother's condition. Mrs. Englefield was declared to be seriously ill.

The doctor was summoned. Her fever had taken a bad turn, he said. It was a very bad turn; for after a few days it was found to be carrying her swiftly to death's door. She was unable to see her children, or at least unable to recognize and speak to them, until the very last day; and then too feeble. And the Sunday when Matilda had expected

to be baptized, saw her mother's funeral instead.

Anne and Letitia came up from New York, but were obliged to return thither immediately after the funeral; and the two younger girls were left to their grief. It was well for them now that they had plenty of business, plenty of active work on hand. It was a help to Maria; after a little it diverted her thoughts and took her out of the strain of sorrow. And it was a help to Matilda, but in a more negative way. It kept the child from grieving herself ill, or doing herself a mischief with violent sorrow; it was no relief. In every unoccupied moment, whenever the demands of household business left her free to do what she would, the little girl bent beneath her burden of sorrow. Kneeling before her open Bible, her tears flowed incessantly every moment when the luxury of indulgence could be allowed them. Mrs. Candy did not see the whole of this; she was rarely in the girls' room; yet she saw enough to

become uneasy, and tried all that she knew to remedy it. Clarissa was kind, to her utmost power of kindness. Even Maria was stirred to try some soothing for her little sister. But Matilda could not be soothed. Maria's instances and persuasions did however at last urge her to the point of shewing a part of her thoughts and disclosing the thorn that pressed sharpest on her mind. It was, that she had not pleased her mother by doing her best in the studies she had pursued at school. Matilda had always been a little self-indulgent; did not trouble herself with study; made no effort to reach or keep a good place in her classes. Mrs. Englefield had urged and commanded her in vain. Not obstinately, but with a sort of gay carelessness, Matilda had let these exhortations slip; had studied when she was interested, and lagged behind her companions in the pursuits she found dry. And now, she could not forgive herself nor cease her sorrowing on account of this failure.

Maria in despair at last took Mrs. Candy

into her confidence, and besought her to comfort Matilda. Which Mrs. Candy tried her best to do. She represented, that Matilda had always been a good child; had loved and honoured her mother, and constantly enjoyed her favour. Matilda heard, but answered with sobs.

"I am sure, my dear," her aunt said, "you have nothing to reproach yourself with. We are none of us perfect."

"I didn't do what I could, aunt Candy!" was Matilda's answer.

"My dear, hardly anybody — the best of us — does all he might do."

"I will," — said Matilda.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS could not last always, and the days as they passed, after a while, brought their usual soothing.

The quiet routine of the early spring began to come in again. Mrs. Candy was looking for a girl, she said, but had not found one yet; Maria and Matilda were not ready to go to school; they were better getting the breakfast and washing up the dishes than doing nothing. No doubt that was true.

"Tilly," said Maria one of these days, when the coffee cups were getting put in order, going out of Maria's tub of hot water into Matilda's hands and napkin,—"Tilly! you know next Sunday there is to be a baptism in the church?"

"Yes," said Matilda.

It was weeks after that other Sunday, when the rite had *not* been administered. Spring had come forward rapidly since then. Trees were in full leaf; dandelions in the grass; flowers were in the woods, though the two sisters had not gone to see them this year; the apple orchards around Shadywalk were in a cloud of pink blossoms; and the sun was warm upon flower and leaf everywhere.

"Who is going to be baptized?" Maria went on.

"I don't know. At least, I don't know all."

"Ailie Swan is," remarked Maria.

"Yes, I know Ailie Swan is."

"And Frances Barth."

Matilda was silent.

"And Esther Trembleton — and George Rice, and Mary and Willie Edwards."

"I suppose so," said Matilda.

"You are not, are you?"

"You know I *was* going to be," said Matilda. "I am now."

"Tilly, it would be no harm if you waited till another time."

"Why should I wait?"

"*I* am going to wait," said Maria.

"Why?"

"Why, because I don't feel like it. Not now."

"I do not want to wait," said Matilda. And probably she was going to say more, but her lip trembled and she stopped.

"It would be no harm, Tilly, if you waited. Nobody would expect it of us now. *Nobody* would expect it, Tilly."

"I think One would," — said Matilda.

"Who?"

"Jesus."

"But Tilly," said Maria uneasily, "I don't think so. It could not be pleasant for you and me, you know, to go forward and be baptized *now*. We might wait till another time; and then it would be more easy, wouldn't it?"

"It is not hard now," said Matilda. "It

is pleasant now. I do not wish to put it off."

"Pleasant?" repeated Maria.

"Yes," said her little sister quietly, lifting her eyes to Maria's face so steadily and gravely that the other changed her ground.

"But at least it is not duty, Matilda."

Matilda had dried all the cups, and she threw her napkin down and covered her face.

"O yes!" she said,—"it is duty and pleasure too. I'll do what I can."

"But what does it signify, your doing it?" said Maria. "It isn't anything. And it will look so odd if you do and I don't."

Matilda took up her napkin again and went to work at the plates.

"Matilda, I wish you would wait. I am not ready to go now."

"But I am ready, Maria."

"If I was to tell aunt Candy, I believe she would put a stop to it," said Maria sulkily. "I know she does not think much of such young people doing such things."

"But Jesus said, Let them come."

Maria tossed her head. However she did not speak to Mrs. Candy.

So it was with no notion of Matilda's intention that her aunt that Sunday took her seat in Mr. Richmond's church. She had heard that a number of people, most of them young people, were to be baptized in the evening; she had been to her own church duly in the morning, and thought she might gratify her curiosity now in seeing how these things are managed in a different communion. She and Clarissa went alone, not supposing that the younger ones of the family were at that same moment getting ready to follow.

"How are you going to dress yourself, Matilda?" her sister inquired.

"To dress myself!" said Matilda, turning her eyes upon her sister in astonished fashion.

"Why yes, child! you will go out there in sight of everybody, you know. Aren't you going to put on a white frock? Clarissa says they always do in 'her church.'"

Matilda looked down at her own black dress and burst into tears; only by a vigorous effort she kept the tears from falling, after the first one or two, and hurriedly and silently began to get herself ready.

"But Matilda! why don't you speak?" said her sister. "Are you going just so? and why don't you speak to me? There is no harm in a white frock."

"I don't want a white frock," said Matilda. "Do *you* mean to stay at home?"

"I suppose I am going," said Maria, beginning slowly her own preparations. "People would think odd if I didn't go. Where are you going to sit?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why you are very stupid. I mean, where are you going to sit?"

"Where we always do, I suppose."

"But then you would have so far to walk."

"To walk?" Matilda repeated, bewildered.

"Why yes, child! When you are called to

go up with the rest, you know; you would have so far to go."

"O!" — said Matilda. "What of it?"

"Don't you care?"

"Why no. It don't make any difference."

"Well, I'd have a white frock, if I were you," said Maria. "Being in black is no objection to that; for people do, just the same, Matilda, for a baptism."

"You will be late, Maria," was all the answer her little sister made.

And they were late. Matilda was ready and waiting, before Maria's slow preparations were made. They walked quick, but service had begun in the church before they got there. They paused in the vestibule till a prayer should be ended. And here Matilda was seized upon.

"I thought you were not coming," said an earnest whisper. "What made you come so late?" It was Norton Laval.

"I couldn't help it," said Matilda.

"And when you came, I all but missed

you. They said all of you — you know — would be in white dresses; and I was looking out for white. Aren't you going to be baptized, after all?"

"O yes, Norton."

"Well here's some flowers for you," said the boy, putting a bunch of white heath and lilies into Matilda's hand. "Mamma is here — up in the Dawsons' pew — it was sold with the place, so we've got it. Come there, Matilda, it will be a good place for you; yours is farther back, you know. Mamma told me to bring you."

Maria had gone in, after an impatient whisper to her sister. And Matilda yielded to a secret inclination and followed Norton.

The service of baptism was not entered into until the close of the evening. During one of the intervals of the usual service, which preceded the other, Matilda questioned with herself if she really would have done better to put on a white dress? Everybody seemed to expect it. She could not, from the Daw

son pew, which was a corner front one, see how her companions were dressed. But she presently recollected that the "fine linen," which Mr. Richmond had talked to them about, "is the righteousness of saints;" and she quieted herself with the assurance that the real attire of fitness is inward and not outward. And when the candidates for baptism were called to come forward, she quietly left her bunch of lilies with her hat on the cushion of the pew.

"Is that Matilda!" whispered Clarissa to her mother.

"I never heard a word of it!" said Mrs. Candy.

"You cannot stop her now."

"No — if I could I would," answered Mrs. Candy. "This ought not to be. Such a child! — does not know what she is doing What a way!"

But Matilda knew what she was doing; and when the candidates were asked respecting their faith and profession, there was no

voice among them all that answered more clear and free; none that promised with more calm distinctness to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same, all the days of her life." And it was a meek little face, without a cloud or a doubt upon it, that was raised towards Mr. Richmond when her turn came.

There was a long line of candidates for baptism, reaching nearly from one end to the other of the communion rails. Mr. Richmond stood near one end, by the font, and did not change his place; so each one, as he or she received the rite, passed to one side, while the place was filled by another. Without breaking the rank this was done; one set slowly edging along from left to right, while from right to left, one by one, the others came to take their turn. It was a pretty sight. So some thought; but there were varieties of opinion.

One variety Matilda had to encounter that night before she slept. Going back to Mrs.

Laval's pew to get her hat and flowers, naturally she walked home with her and Norton, and had no annoyance until she got there. As she went through the hall the parlour door opened and she was called in.

"I want to speak to you, Matilda," said Mrs. Candy; "and I think it is proper to do it at once. I want to know about this. How long have you been preparing for this step you have taken to-night?"

"Ma'am?" said Matilda.

"How long have you been thinking of doing this?"

"O, a long while, aunt Candy."

"Why did you not consult me?"

Her mother would have been the one to speak to about it, and her mother had been too ill. Remembering this, Matilda stood silent and her eyes filled.

"You have been intending it for these two months past?"

"Yes, aunt Candy; and before."

"Well then, why did you not speak to me?"

"I spoke to Mr. Richmond."

"Mr. Richmond might have had the courtesy, himself." (Which Mr. Richmond had meant to do, but various pressing matters had prevented.) "But *you* ought to have spoken to me, Matilda. You are too young a child to take such responsibility."

Matilda did not think of anything to say to this.

"I do not think you understand what you have been doing."

"I think I do, aunt Candy."

"What did you want to be baptized for?"

"Because Jesus says we must."

"Yes, properly; but not improperly, without knowing what you do. What do you think it means, Matilda?"

"To be baptized, aunt Erminia?"

"Yes."

"It means," said the child steadily and with the clear utterance of pleasure, — "that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

"There!" said Clarissa, appealing to her mother.

"I thought so," said Mrs. Candy. "That is not what it means, Matilda."

"It is what I mean, aunt Candy."

"It means a great deal more, my dear, which you cannot understand. And you ought to have had a white dress on."

"I don't think God cares," said Matilda.

"Did you ever hear such dreadful teaching as these people have?" said the mother appealing to the daughter. "My dear, there is a propriety in things. And not one of the candidates this evening was dressed in white."

"But the water means a clean heart," said Matilda; "and if we have that, God will think we *are* dressed in white."

"So you think you have a clean heart?"

"I think Jesus has begun to make it clean."

"And what does it mean, to renounce the devil and all his works?"

"It means," said Matilda sighing, — "to

have nothing to do with anything that is wrong."

"How is such a child as you to know what is wrong?"

"Why, the Bible, aunt Candy."

"What is the vain pomp and glory of the world?"

"I don't know," said Matilda. "*All* the glory, I suppose, except what God gives."

"What does *he* give, child?" said Mrs. Candy, with an odd expression on her face.

"Why you know, aunt Erminia," said Matilda, a little wearily.

"I should like to hear you tell."

"I can't tell," said Matilda. "I think it was glory, when he said of that poor woman, 'She hath done what she could.'"

"My dear," said Mrs. Candy, after a pause, "I am very sorry you have taken this step without consulting me. Your answers shew that you have not the discrimination necessary for making such vows. However, it is too late now. You may go to bed."

Which Matilda did, and speedily forgot all that had troubled her in her aunt's words. For she went to sleep making a pillow to her head of those other words, —

"And white robes were given to every one of them."

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